

Parish M^r & Peery

Norothy McCreery

Effectual Fervent Prayer

Effectual Fervent Prayer

MEDITATIONS ON
THE LIFE OF DEVOTION

BY THE REV.

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"The Strategic Value of Prayer," "The Meaning of the Cross,"
"The Cross in Faith and Conduct," etc.

THE BIOLA BOOK ROOM

BIBLE INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES

536-558 SOUTH HOPE STREET
LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

INTRODUCTION

MR. GORDON WATT has asked me to write a short Introduction to his book, *Effectual Fervent Prayer*. The anagram of Presbyterian is *Best in Prayer*. Mr. Gordon Watt is a Presbyterian. His book amply confirms the anagram. Is there need to say more ?

Realizing, however, that something more may possibly be expected, one would like to add a line expressing one's high appreciation of the work that is now being issued to the public. From evidence before us the papers in their serial form in **THE CHRISTIAN** have already proved very helpful to many.

When we scan the pages of the Old Testament and the New we realize what a large place Prayer occupies in the Word of God, and what value God Himself attaches to the exercise of Prayer. The example of the Patriarchs and the Saints of old ; the example of the great Apostle of the Gentiles ; but, above all, the example of our Lord Himself should urge us to seek constant and intimate communion with our Heavenly Father. *This book will stimulate our desires !*

There have been given unto us such large and generous promises, such encouragements to draw near, that it is astonishing how the children of God fail so often to avail themselves of the mighty influences that hang upon believing Prayer—a spiritual force incalculably strong in its workings, and precious in its fruit-bearing. Surely at all times, and in all circumstances, those who “believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those that seek after Him,” and who also believe the statements of God’s Word to be realities, should be unceasingly under captivity to earnest Prayer. Assiduity in Prayer—importunity in Prayer—bring always rich reward. *This book will teach us how!*

What is Prayer? It is not merely the multiplying of words. How often by the flow of mere words has the spirit of Prayer been killed! “Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try.” Prayer is learning to speak with God. In its highest form Prayer is deep meditation alone with God. We must take time to pray. How often do men rush heedlessly into the exercise of Prayer! Do we not sometimes forget that it has been written: “Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God and be more ready *to hear* than *to give the sacrifice of fools*”? Do we always give the Sun of Righteousness a chance to thaw the frozen avenues

of the soul before we begin to offer up Prayer?
This book will steady us!

Perhaps the times of most powerful Prayer are those when we are absolutely alone with God—alone in the darkness—all other presences shut out—all earthly noises stilled. When in these “rapturous silences”—silences worthy of the greatness of our God—one draws nigh to the very Throne, under the power of the Holy Spirit, and lovingly grips in faith the pierced Hands of the enthroned Christ, letting the heart say, rather than the tongue, *my Lord and my God!*—*then it is* that the power of Prayer is most keenly felt; *then it is* that the strengthening dynamic of the Almighty flows into the soul; and one feels that one can do all things through Christ. “All things are possible with God.” “All things are possible to him that believeth.” *This book will lead us there!*

We trust that *Effectual Fervent Prayer* will have a circulation worthy of its title, worthy of its merits, and worthy of its author, whom for nearly forty years we have known and admired for his unswerving loyalty to Jesus Christ, often at great personal sacrifice. We feel sure that the book of such a man will carry with it everywhere rich and abiding results. *We wish it a hearty God-speed!*

ROBT. CALDWELL.

LONDON, December 1927.

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EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER

CHAPTER I

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

" Say, what is prayer, when it is prayer indeed ?
The mighty utterance of a mighty need.
The man is praying, who doth press with might
Out of his darkness into God's own light."

" I sought for a man . . . that should . . . stand in the gap. . . ."—EZEK. xxii. 30.

" **T**HE present condition of the Moslem world," states Dr. Zwemer, " calls for prayer." But the need of one race specifically is the need of each race generally. That need, of Christian and non-Christian nations alike, constitutes the call to the Church of God to " stand in the gap " through definite, sustained, believing intercession for the accomplishment of the purposes of grace.

The focusing of light upon this universal need discloses two reasons why Christian workers should seek more clearly to understand the meaning of prayer, and set themselves, individually and unitedly, to this greatest possible service.

I

In national life *the world conditions* present one predominant feature—inability on the part of leaders to cope with and solve problems of unprecedented difficulty. Does it not seem as if governing bodies in every sphere of life were suffering from deliberate interference by the forces of evil? Look where we may, the present state of the world can be truthfully described as chaotic above, volcanic below. And no one dare say when the eruption may not break out.

Sadly perilous is the *state of religion*. The landslide from the faith once delivered to the saints continues. Denial of truth is the fashion of the hour. The Church is in straits. On mission-fields, division threatens to bring disaster. Suspicion of ecclesiastical leaders and missionary boards grows strong in many minds. Financial appeals are left unheeded. Revival tarries. Sin is flagrantly bold, and the agonizing sense of it seems to be dying out of religious teaching. Satanic subtlety drives in wedges between Christian workers, and many children of God seem smitten with blindness, preventing their recognition of the source of schism and failure.

“Let Satan’s subtlety make thee more wise and wary thyself. Thou hast not a fool to deal with, but one that hath wit enough to spill thy comfort and spoil thy joy if not narrowly watched. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell,

and though the devil's way in tempting be as wonderful as the way of a serpent on a rock, yet God traceth him " (Gurnall).

Nothing can ever be gained by refusing to face facts. But what is the need? "I sought for a man . . . that should . . . stand in the gap." Must God say of us to-day, "And I found none"?

A crisis demands speedy action. How is the need to be met? Not through a fatalistic attitude to evils prophesied as certain of fulfilment. That way lie weakness and further defeat. Shall we not press into the gap, and, holding it for God in this critical hour, learn of the Holy Spirit how to pray, and pray aggressively against the forces that oppose?

To stand thus in the gap implies more, much more, than merely uttering devotional phrases in prayer. It is to take the spiritual battle into the camp of the enemy, for prayer is not only petition, it is warfare. To stand with God is to recognize that the causes of division and deception and impotence among the true members of the Body of Christ are to be traced mainly to a satanic source, and are to be removed, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through faith in that victory won over the prince of the world on the Cross by the Son of God, by each believer seeking to live out, honestly and practically, the meaning of spiritual union.

The prayer that tells for God, that "moves things" in the spiritual atmosphere, that "gets somewhere," and "does something," is a work, not merely a word. And one of the most necessary attainments for the believer, in this fight against the powers of evil, is

to learn how to *focus prayer* on the need which meets him at the moment. In many a prayer-meeting valuable time is spent, and strategic opportunities lost, through ineffective generalities.

The need of the hour requires us to remember that there is such a thing as the *science* of prayer, and that, for the successful accomplishment of the work of the Lord, it is imperative to understand how best to use the power given by the Holy Spirit in this great spiritual conflict.

When London was raided by airships we were told that the searchlights sought over the sky for them, and, when found, would focus upon them, keeping them in their merciless glare until the aircraft artillery had done its work. Upon the specific force that hinders the work of God we need to focus the power of prayer, causing all the rays of light, which come to us through the Word of Truth, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit, through our growing knowledge of the methods of evil, and the message of circumstances, to converge on the point where the enemy holds sway.

The late Mr. Hudson Taylor used to pray about every mission station, for every missionary, and round every circumstance known to him in connection with his work. Such careful, specific, aggressive supplication and intercession are needed to-day, and must be made deliberately persistent until some battle is won, and the way opened for further and mightier progress. To frustrate satanic plans, to carry through to victory the purpose of God, to bring about a lightening of burdens and a dispersion

of evil forces, calls for continual dependence on and co-operation with the Holy Spirit.

Three powers are ours to use in prayer amid the darkness of the spiritual situation, and they are mighty : the Name of Jesus, the Word of God, the Blood of Christ. In alliance with the Holy Ghost we can learn the secret of using them against the devil and the demon powers of darkness. But the measure of our surrender to Him is the measure of our power in prayer.

Honest, sincere yieldedness to Him at each point of life will make prayer a force for victory in every place. Through our union with Christ in His Cross prayer will be filled with the spirit of conquest in the Name of the Victor of Calvary, by the living Word, and the precious Blood.

Do we believe that Satan is loosing out forces of evil at home, and on every mission-field ? Are we meeting them in our churches and organizations ? Have we felt their attack upon ourselves and the spirits of others ? " Have we to face these things to-day ? " wrote the late Dr. J. H. Jowett : " Do not ride away on an irrelevant criticism : hold close to life. Have we any confirmatory evidence of Satan's attacks in our own souls ? "

Then, we may be sure he is attacking everywhere, and the call to us is to stand in the gap, and, joined to the Lord Jesus Christ on the ground of His victory on Calvary, to bring to bear in aggressive warfare upon evil the power of the Name, the Word, and the Blood. That prayer spirit, that yieldedness of life, that attitude of aggressiveness against evil, will

give God His opportunity in this time of increasing need.

II

While present events solemnize and fill our hearts with awe, as we wonder what form the next unveiling of the world's unrest may take; looking at them in the clear light of God's revealed truth, we realize that we are standing at one of the most momentous points in earthly history. The very darkness around us makes divine pronouncements shine out the more brilliantly.

The light that streams upon divine prophecy from the actions of men and the conditions of nations, and is cast back by the Word of God on the world-forces at work, gives reason for believing that the crisis of the ages is at hand. The future is "as bright as the promises of God." A great hope throbs in the heart. To the eyes of the watchful the dawn of a better day is breaking. Christ is coming!

But, with the expectation of His appearing grows more intense and cruel the grip of Satan, through demon powers, on the human race. The legions of evil are rolling up and pressing in upon the Church. Earthward there is deepening darkness: heavenward increasing light. The mingling voices of human despair and divine promise call us to a renewed consecration in prayer because the end is near, and victory is assured. That fact should thrill our hearts, making us "press with might out of darkness into God's own light." The need for prayer is the call of the Eternal for believers to enter into active

co-operation with Himself in meeting the challenge of evil.

Never has God been passive in the face of that challenge. Watch how He answers it in Eden, with the promise of a Redeemer, in the Ark, in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, in mercy during the long captivities of His people, in the gift of His Son, the founding of His Church, the translation and publication of the Holy Scriptures into the languages of the nations, in Reformations and Revivals, in missionary enterprise, and the constantly recurring interest in the Return of the Lord.

Prayer is not merely a closet exercise of personal communion, but an acting with God in His battle against evil. Are we taking up the challenge of Satan in our own home, with its tests and trials? In our Church, with its measure of indifference and spiritual deadness? In the land, with its manifestly increasing demon possession? In the world, with its frequent exhibitions of satanic power and fury? Or are we letting things drift? Are we passively submitting to the oppression and antagonism of the powers of darkness, throwing up our hands in a confession of impotence and ignorance of how to act; or are we alert, as Paul and Epaphras were, "labouring fervently in prayer," and setting ourselves aggressively in union with the Holy Spirit, to resist the foe?

Through different channels to-day come appeals for help in the conflict, from hard-pressed missionaries, from perplexed workers, from burdened parents, from baffled men and women; and the

need of the hour is to learn the methods of evil, to watch the field of spiritual operations, to keep in close touch with the Risen Lord on the Throne, to have unfaltering faith in the power of prayer through the Holy Ghost, and taking up our position with Christ, to hold it in the spirit of victory, until right displaces wrong, and deliverance comes to souls in peril.

(1) *Full surrender to God for the work of intercession is without doubt the first and most clamant imperative.* The basis of victorious prayer, as it is equally the ground of triumphant living, is disclosed in the command, "Yield yourselves unto God." Calvary is meaningless, or resultless, unless it creates such a spirit of yieldingness as permits of the Holy Spirit accomplishing the purpose of the sacrifice of the Saviour.

Prayer is translated into a real fighting force against evil, as the Cross, through the Spirit of God, succeeds in making actual in the life of the believer freedom from the domination of the self-life. In the measure in which Satan can find the old Adam nature his ally in the heart, must there be a hindrance to the power of God, and a resultant weakness in the attitude and action of the believer. Personal victory over every form of sin conditions our ability to stand with God in definite aggressiveness of spirit against His enemy.

(2) *Following this, it is our privilege to make practical in the life of each hour what is really meant by the death of Christ.* Not only is the outcome of that act of wondrous love forgiveness of sin and

assurance of eternal life through Christ ; not only does the sacrifice of the Son of God on the Tree make possible for each redeemed soul a delivered life, but Calvary stands for the complete defeat of Satan, and thus holds for us, in the conflict, the supply of power which can make that defeat actual in experience.

Our responsibility, therefore, because of our privilege, is to hold, in alliance with the Holy Spirit, the fact and power of the " finished work of Christ," without cessation, over him and his hosts, his methods and his works, until victory has been gained. It puts force into prayer to claim, on the ground of the Blood shed, the loosening of the devil's grip, the beating back of the " rulers of darkness," and the success of righteousness and truth.

Do not pray only for the blessing of God in Christian work, but with equal might and faith pray against the blight of the kingdom of evil. Pray out lies : pray in truth. Pray out the forces of deception and destruction : pray in the life and light of the Lord.

Prayer can not only bring in revival, but it can push out Satan from any ground he has gained in a life or a church or a work, by wielding through implicit, bold, triumphant faith the victory of the Cross against him and every expression of his evil power. Standing in the gap, according to the need of God, it must constantly be borne in mind that passivity of spirit and will, in prayer, is fatal. The activity of all God-given powers is requisite, if the Holy Spirit is to find the human channels through

which He can bring to a glorious consummation the longings of the divine heart.

“ If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord . . . then hear Thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication and maintain their cause ” (1 Kings viii. 44, 45).

The need of the hour is wrestlers, like Paul ; agonizers, like Epaphras. The intercessors for whom God is waiting are men and women who have caught the vision of the battle-field with all its possibilities and perils, and who, awake to the devices of the devil, have set themselves in union with the living Christ to attack every position he occupies and give deliverance to the captives.

CHAPTER II

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PRAYER

" In the calm of sweet communion let thy daily work be done ;
In the peace of soul-outpouring care be banished, patience won ;
And if earth with its enchantments seek thy spirit to enthrall,
Ere thou listen, ere thou answer—turn to Jesus—tell Him all."

" Seven times a day do I praise Thee."—Ps. cxix. 164.

" Evening and morning and at noon will I pray."—Ps. lv. 17.

IN the New Testament there is no figure of the Christian life more true to experience than that of a conflict. The children of God, by the very nature of their birth, are summoned to fight. And the first condition of victory is to be alive to that fact. The Christian who knows little or nothing of a contest with spiritual foes is manifestly under the heel of his enemy, dwelling in an atmosphere of unreality and deception ; while the absence of victory is a proof that he is being trampled on by that enemy. Neither of these experiences has any place in the plan of God for a believer.

Since conflict is inseparable from our union with Christ, we must recognize that the most potent weapon with which to meet the foe is Prayer. It is well, therefore, to remind ourselves that prayer has many aspects, because spiritual experience is many-sided. In the Word of God it is presented, as a holy exercise, neither stereotyped in manner nor with any formality of expression. And that fact contains encouragement for God's intercessors.

The Scriptures show men in different bodily postures while in prayer. Joshua fell on his face before God (Josh. vii. 6). David sat in the presence of the Lord and communed with Him (2 Sam. vii. 18). Solomon stood (1 Kings viii. 22) or kneeled (2 Chron. vi. 13) in the sanctuary. The people bowed their heads in worship (1 Chron. xxix. 20).

On the varying expressions of prayer, light is thrown by the Word of God. It describes the act of prayer as talking with God (Ex. xxxiv. 29), as supplication (Ps. xxx. 8), or setting the face toward heaven (Dan. ix. 3). It speaks of the solitariness of prayer (Mark i. 35), as well as of its continuance (Luke vi. 12) and unity (Acts xii. 12).

Scripture also reveals the fact that prayer is meant to suit all circumstances, experiences, and needs. Thus it shows us—Christ praying at His baptism. Again, as He called His disciples to their ministry He spent the night in prayer (Luke vi. 13). A day full of work and commotion was an additional reason for entering into communion with His Father (Mark vi. 31). Physical pain and weakness on the Cross did not deter Him from the act of supplication (Luke xxiii. 34).

In like manner in the pages of the Bible we discover different aspects of prayer, differently recorded ideas of prayer in the life of the believer.

I

“Let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. iv. 6). Petition, the outcome of conscious

need, is a form of prayer natural to the babe in Christ, for need must always give out a cry for help. And yet such prayer can never be absent from the mind and lips of the most mature believer. In one sense Christian living is a continuous supplication, simply because growth in grace reveals increasing knowledge of personal requirements.

In the Westminster Shorter Catechism the definition given of prayer is marked by its fulness and literal truthfulness: PRAYER IS THE OFFERING UP OF OUR DESIRES UNTO GOD FOR THINGS AGREEABLE TO HIS WILL, IN THE NAME OF CHRIST, WITH CONFESSION OF OUR SINS, AND THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR MERCIES.

As Scripture is God's letter wherein He opens up His mind to man, so prayer is the Christian's letter in which he makes known his desires to God, and one of the early Fathers of the Church calls it a "lifting up of the mind to God."

Is there not encouragement in this, the simplest idea of prayer? For the child of God who cannot audibly take any part in a prayer-meeting may yet acceptably pray, since prayer is the offering up, not necessarily of words, but of desires. "True prayer," wrote the late Bishop Moule, "can be uttered under innumerable circumstances."

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

After all, what is the desire of "a humble, lowly, contrite heart" but the reflection of the desire of

God; for all true prayer begins in His presence at the Throne of Grace. Words are the shell, desires the kernel. It is at the heart that God looks rather than at the lip. What we truly desire is much more to Him than what we actually ask.

But this is not the only view of the prayer life, although with all too many prayer seldom seems to reach higher than a continuous appeal to meet personal needs.

In the carrying on of the purposes of His grace, God requires more than babes in His service. He needs those "of full age," men and women rich in experience, strong in action, "able to go forth to war." Consider, therefore, another side to prayer.

II

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13). Prayer is more than pleading with God to grant some request. It is not persuading Him to give something unwillingly. As His children, it is our right to call to our aid in the conflict with evil all the authority which belongs to the victorious Christ to make our own what He says may be ours.

To pray in the Name of Christ is to claim, by an act of triumphing faith, that what He says can be done shall be done. It is surely no more presumptuous to exercise authority in His Name over the forces of evil, so as to tread them down and rob them of their power to work mischief (Luke x. 19),

than it is to use the same authority as, in the same Name and at the command of the same ONE, we go forth to proclaim the everlasting Gospel! (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

“If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it.” If we can but catch the full vision of Calvary, as God’s pledge of complete victory over the powers of darkness for His Son, and all who follow Him, we shall find timidity in prayer giving place to courageous faith, and the conviction deepening in the spirit, that, in alliance with the Holy Ghost, we can, by the authority of Him who is enthroned in glory through the Cross, remove mountains, pull down strongholds, deliver captives from prison houses, and see the victory won.

It is an axiom of spiritual experience, as well as a constant affirmation of the Word of God, that power over sin has a great bearing on the right of a believer to use the Name of Jesus before the Throne.

When the High Priest entered the Holy Place, a golden coronet encircled his brow, with the words engraven on it, “Holiness to the Lord.” In the presence of Jehovah man must be yielded to Him, with the blood of the sin-offering effecting its purpose of cleansing and acceptance.

In the full possession of our beings by the Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood of the Cross and the grace of the Holy Spirit, lies the guarantee of our right to pray in His Holy Name.

As a result of our unreserved dedication the Holy Spirit will guide us to seek a true knowledge

of the will of God, implanting in our hearts a confidence to ask what will be in harmony with His holy mind.

III

In the New Testament two Greek words are used for *intercession*, the one meaning to fall in with the desire of another, the other to devise a plan to meet a need. (See 1 Tim. ii. 1 ; Rom. viii. 24, 27.)

The intercessor, in an audience with God, discovers His plan, and, falling in with His will, becomes the channel through which there is carried out the divine purpose. There is suggested in this meaning of intercession a side to prayer of infinite value, but which may not always be present to the mind of a believer.

In the life and service to which a Christian is called it is a matter of the utmost importance for him to acquire the habit of instant reference to God through prayer of every matter of concern. To emphasize this is not unnecessary, because the natural disposition of each of us is to deal with a difficulty, or a need, first of all on human lines. We form our own plans and have much cause in the future for regret. We hasten to take counsel of others, with the frequent experience that advice, given wholly by the intellect, leads to no real and permanent result; so finding our difficulties increased.

Intercession, to reach its end, must look at the needs of the world or the Church from the standpoint of Calvary, for the important factor in prayer

is not the sense of human need, but the discovery of the plan of God, while the condition of answered prayer is coinciding with His will. Here is the truth which brings help and gives light—"Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, . . . the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us. . . ."

IV

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul emphasizes the foundation facts on which the Church stands, as she is "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and the foundation promises through which her life is developed. The second chapter shows the natural condition of each believer, and the grace that transforms him from a child of wrath into a member of the family of God; while in the succeeding chapter the Apostle paints the "breaking down of the middle wall of partition," Jew and Gentile becoming fellow-heirs and partakers of the same promises. Then the fourth and fifth chapters declare with unmistakable clearness the duties, practical and personal, which devolve on each member of the Body of Christ; and at the close of the fifth chapter he lifts our eyes to see the Church, spotless and stainless, at the Throne of God. But we are not left with that vision: we are still in the flesh; and therefore in the last chapter St. Paul calls us back to earth, bidding us recognize the part we must play to hasten the final triumph of the Lord of glory. "We wrestle, . . . take unto

you the whole armour of God, . . . stand therefore."

Serious work has to be accomplished. The word "wrestle" is taken from the old games, when each competitor sought to lay his antagonist on the ground, and put his foot upon his neck. *We wrestle*: it is the call of the Commander to arms. But not with flesh and blood is the battle to be waged. Many of Satan's most telling victories are won through clever stratagems, by which he sets one believer as judge over another, or impels from lips that have sworn allegiance to Christ words which create bitterness of spirit, and contradict the profession of brotherly love.

When professing Christians are engaged in the colossal folly of fighting each other, seeking out and proclaiming abroad their special faults and weaknesses, the devil can afford to smile, and leave them alone. They are doing his work. They have no time to fight him. The foes of the Church are never solely human. They are the principalities and powers and rulers, which stand behind flesh and blood, using it so skilfully that it is blind to the fact that it is being thus used.

The conflict is not physical but spiritual, in which the foe is unceasingly on the offensive, ever ready, through wiles and lies, deceits and stratagems, to force himself in upon mind and spirit, taking life and its powers captive, and rendering them useless for God and the Church.

To challenge this enemy, as his methods are disclosed, is essential for a growing Christian experience.

And here we touch a point of failure. For life is not infrequently a spiritual compromise rather than a spiritual conflict. Many believers seem to go with the stream instead of courageously stemming the current. Not all the children of God are standing in the gap. Some there are who sit upon the fence. And God is looking for intercessors who, recognizing prayer to be a mighty weapon of offence, will get into grips with the powers of darkness (as the wrestler holds his opponent) and in co-operation with the Holy Spirit bring to bear upon them the full significance and power of the victory won on Calvary.

Prayer, therefore, in the most real sense of the word, is to be translated into such action as will give the Holy Spirit the opportunity of meeting and driving back every force of evil, that surges forward to obstruct the progress of the purposes of grace. "Prayer is meant to be," wrote the late Dr. Moule, "an infinitely important transaction between God and man, and it has to be viewed as a work, involving labour, persistence, conflict, if it would be prayer indeed."

There are four prepositions which may usefully be joined to the word "pray," to give us a clear, precise understanding of the work, to which the Cross and the Throne, through the growing need of the world, call us.

FOR.—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. vii. 7).

WITH.—In co-operation with the Holy Spirit the

prayer life is to be carried on. Failure is frequently the result of not recognizing that partnership (John xv. 26, 27).

AGAINST.—Let us recognize that there is an enemy whose purpose is to block the path of the Church to victory, and hinder it in the work of rescuing the perishing, and we shall better understand what St. Paul affirms, that prayer is warfare, a partnership with the Holy Spirit in His attitude of judgment on sin, and in His antagonism to Satan (Eph. vi. 12).

THROUGH.—“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance” (Eph. vi. 18). It is no light thing to hold on in such an attitude of spiritual intensity, and pray through the massed forces of evil into an experience of victory; but for the Church at home, and along the far-flung battle line of the Empire of Christ among all peoples, no need is greater than for consecrated believers, firmly standing, by an act of living faith and surrender, on the victory of Calvary, and claiming the realization of its meaning and power in all its divine fulness.

CHAPTER III

THE CROSS AND INTERCESSION

" He of old the Man of sorrows,
Pleads before the Father's face,
Knowing all the needed solace,
Claiming all the needed grace.
Girded with the golden girdle,
Shining as the mighty sun,
Still His piercèd hands will finish
All His work of love begun."

" Able also to save . . . seeing He ever liveth to make intercession."—HEB. vii. 25.

IT is not difficult to see the link between the green hill outside the city wall and the seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Christ's ability to save on earth arises from His place at the centre of all power, where He lives to intercede. His intercession grows out of (is based upon) His finished work on Calvary.

Giving His life in sacrifice for sin, He is able to take up His life in the service of intercession. There is therefore no break in the divine work of redemption. In ceaseless power the story of the Cross proceeds, and when it is unfolded to the gaze of the redeemed, made clear to them in the light of eternity, what a record will be given of the miracles wrought by the Great Intercessor at the right hand of the Father !

What is His intercession? The Greek word used has the meaning of "hitting upon" a plan to meet a need. The advocacy of the Lord is more than words. It is a work of unceasing interposition on behalf of each child of God in accordance with his special requirement.

Never for a moment does His prayer service slacken. By day and night the Lord Jesus is thinking out how to put in motion the spiritual forces, which will most surely answer the cry of the burdened soul, and create possible sources for the accomplishment of His own holy desires. Do not let us hurry the Lord in a response to our prayer. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust . . . rest . . . wait patiently for Him" (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 7).

What is the claim which He makes upon us on the ground of Calvary and His intercession? Is it not for a prayer partnership with Himself, for all that He has in view for the world, and for what it must mean to the believer in personal growth and experience?

Looking at prayer in this light, we discover the link between it and the Cross. They are allies in the fight with sin. The one is dependent upon the other for power to carry out practically the meaning of redemption.

Unless a man comes to the Cross, receiving there the forgiveness of his sins and entering into reconciliation with the Father, he has no ground on which to stand for any appeal to God. But, having come there, unless he begins a prayer partnership,

he misses the purpose for which he has been redeemed.

Without the Cross prayer descends into a mere religious formality: without prayer the Cross is arrested in its operations. As the Holy Spirit works in us through the power of the crucified and risen Christ, teaching us the secret of taking, by an act of faith, our place of death to each assertion of the old nature, our spirits find a clear way up into communion at the Throne, and a clear way out into conflict with the forces of evil.

Such is the double object of this co-operation with Christ in prayer. Prayer is the spring of power in conflict. Conflict proves the need and value of prayer.

Only therefore as we keep in close touch with our base can prayer evidence its effectiveness in the warfare of the spirit against the powers of darkness. When we recognize that the Cross is God's way of undoing the effects of the Fall, and bringing to fruition the great plan of grace, we shall the more clearly discern that, in alliance with the Holy Spirit, three things of supreme importance are required of us in this prayer life.

I

When we slacken, the powers of darkness press in. When we fail to pray, the power-house of the Church shuts its door. Nothing is more needed to-day than companies of Christian people everywhere, who can pray, and persist in prayer. The

philosophy of prayer, rightly understood, will impress upon our minds the infinite value to God of a spirit which has learned, in light or darkness, to "continue steadfastly in prayer."

"Satan," said George Müller, "doesn't mind how much a Christian prays, if he can only get him to stop praying."

"Make me an intercessor, in spirit touch with Thee,
And given the heavenly vision, pray through to victory."

Do not let any one be disheartened by a feeling of dryness, or even prayerlessness of spirit in prayer. The mightiest work done on the knees for God is not always marked by fluency of words. Rhetoric in communion with God is to be suspected as probably altogether the outcome of a nimble mentality.

More may be effected in the unseen realms for God and oppressed nations, when it seems absolutely impossible to continue in the exercise of intercession. When Mr. Hudson Taylor was asked if he ever prayed without any consciousness of joy, he replied: "Often: sometimes I pray on with my heart feeling like wood. Often, too, the most wonderful answers have come when prayer has been a real effort of faith without any joy whatever."

II

Each one knows well that hindrances, either from personal or satanic sources, can have a most discouraging and depressing effect. There is the

temptation to become less intense in the prayer spirit. And, therefore, it is vitally necessary to be clear on this point, that to pray on and through and hold our ground in the face of every obstacle is what God expects of us in partnership with His Son.

To hold the ground is to appeal to God to make the victory of Calvary real and full in regard to what we have asked, and to stand in Christ against every possible power of Satan preventing that victory being put in operation.

Asa held the ground when he cried, "We rely on Thee, and IN THY NAME are we come against this multitude" (2 Chron. xiv. 11). As we claim what the death of Christ has procured for us in respect to personal needs and the demands of service, we are relying on the God whose resources are infinite, and whose power is inexhaustible: and in Him we are able to "withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand."

The important thing to remember is that God needs a man who will be His partner, or better, two, joined together in a covenant of believing, persistent, claiming prayer. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19).

Two believers, with the vision of Calvary clear in their spirit, become the fulcrum on which rests the lever which can move the world, and bring relief to burdened souls. By such intercession forces are liberated in the unseen realm, changing

things, and giving evidence of the change in victory in church or mission-field. Let us pray to be partners in this mighty sphere of labour.

“ Make me an intercessor, teach me how to prevail,
To stand my ground and still pray on, though powers of hell
assail.”

What the Church does not require to-day is more organizers. What it lacks and needs, if it is not to fail, is agonizers, saints who have caught the meaning of the Cross, and in its light are seeing the world, death, judgment, heaven, hell, the Return of the Lord, the Tribulation, the Lake of Fire ; and who can dare to allow the Holy Spirit to burden them with a prayer agony for Christ in His Passion and men in their peril.

III

Spiritual service necessarily demands the constant reinforcing of the believer's life, and in the early records of the Church we have instances of the way in which the Holy Spirit re-invigorated the Apostles. In those first hours of Christian witness, prayer existed in its purity and simplicity. As we carefully study the Scripture revelation, we shall find the way to maintain and develop the prayer spirit, so that it becomes a true ally of the Cross in carrying to a glorious culmination the plan of God, which has given to the world, through the Saviour, life, liberty, and hope.

(I) *It is necessary to recognize the connection between the fulfilment of divine promise and prayer.*

"And behold," said the Lord to His disciples on the eve of His departure, "I send the promise of My Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49). Connect that with Acts i. 14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren"; and Acts ii. 4: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

(2) *The spirit of unity develops the prayer sense.* "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer" (Acts ii. 42).

(3) *Facing our tests aright is a great factor in strengthening the spirit of intercession.* "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God . . ." (Acts iv. 24). In the circumstances of these early disciples there existed everything to create in them a feeling of bitterness, and to produce controversy between flesh and blood. How did they act? Threatened with imprisonment, they entered into the presence of God, and said, "Deal Thou with these men." And further victory for the Lord was won. If we would understand that the fight to-day is not with flesh and blood, not with difficulties created by human blindness or obstinacy, but with the powers of darkness behind them, we should the sooner see the foe vanquished, and the way made open for the advance of light and truth.

How we stand the tests of the battle has much to do with the nourishment of the prayer spirit.

(4) *To have the presence of the Lord in reality with us will teach us the meaning of prayer.* "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts vii. 59, 60).

(5) *A conscious sense of the need of others develops the desire for prayer.* "Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 14, 15).

When his wife remonstrated with him for rising at midnight to pray, Welsh of Ayr said: "I have thousands in my parish, and I know not how it is with many of them." A president of a college, when told that he had but half an hour to live, replied: "Then take me out of bed, and put me on my knees, and let me spend it calling on God for the salvation of the world"; and he died upon his knees:

"Make me an intercessor, till pleading at Thy throne,
The sins and sorrows of other lives become as my very own."

(6) *Will not the expectation of blessing lead to prayer?* "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus:

for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts ix. 11, 12). The hope of God working is an inspiration to "pray through" and hold the ground.

(7) *The deliverance of others makes prayer a necessity and a joy.* "Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him . . . (Acts xii. 5). The vision of some one in bondage will surely press out of us the cry that will take no answer save that of deliverance.

(8) *To preserve confidence in God amid life's circumstances has a remarkable influence toward increasing the prayer spirit.* "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed . . . and immediately all the doors were opened . . ." (Acts xvi. 25, 26). What a wonderful victory for God was won in that inner prison through these two men! They were not tearful. There were no groanings. No sign of distress was visible. Songs were heard by the other prisoners. A perfect confidence in God caused Paul and Silas to praise Him for what was coming, and the answer was an earthquake, which flung open the prison doors. In the face of difficulty and darkness may we see God, and know that all is well. The heavenly vision will pray us through to victory.

(9) *The fellowship spirit will be a real source of power in the prayer life.* "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all" (Acts xx. 36). That spirit, so marked in all

the Apostle's relationships with others, makes intercession a great force for God.

Prayer requires to be nourished and cultivated. It must have the right atmosphere in which to grow. But there can be no real satisfaction in this life, to which God eagerly calls us, unless the Holy Spirit and the Cross are working in our lives with perfect harmony. If the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ at the Throne is based on His propitiation at the Cross, it stands to reason that our lives can never be separated from the practical working out in them of that propitiation. The power of prayer depends upon the practice of the Cross. And here let a warning be uttered. It is quite possible for Satan to burden us nervously in prayer, creating a feverish anxiety to tabulate answers to our petitions, bringing about a condition of things where the spiritual poise of the soul becomes shaken, and restlessness takes the place of quiet confidence. Let us guard against rush in the prayer life, against the device of the enemy to drive and push us, either to act without prayer, or pray without quietness of spirit. Let us watch that we do not get out of touch with the Holy Spirit in His constant aim of making the finished work of Christ effective against everything in us on which Satan can operate.

Let us rejoice in this, that we are called into the fellowship of the Son of God in prayer. Three partners form this partnership. There is Christ, the living Intercessor on the Throne, pleading for the Church and world His sacrifice on Calvary, with all its power to save to the uttermost, and lead to

victory. In our hearts the Holy Spirit makes effectually operative His death. And in the church, the business, the home, and the life, the believer, indwelt by the Spirit, and in touch with the Throne, proves the completeness of what has been won for him, as he goes forth to witness for Christ and win men to Him. Oh, let us pray !

“ Pray that your heart gain courage,
Stand in the Victor's Name,
No need to faint or falter,
He is the great I AM.
Pray that the Holy Spirit,
In all His sevenfold might,
Millions of souls may quicken
Flames of revival light.”

CHAPTER IV

PRAYER IN THE HOLY GHOST

"O Breath, from out the Eternal Silence, blow
All softly o'er my spirit's barren ground :
The precious fulness of my God bestow,
That where erst sin and shame alone were found,
Faith, love, and holy reverence may upspring
In spirit and in truth to worship God our King."

"Praying in the Holy Ghost."—JUDE 20.

WHEN it is said that some one spoke or sang in the Spirit, it is equivalent to saying that he spoke or sang under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. Within the inner shrine of his being there was such an attitude God-ward that the Holy Spirit found a way to make speech or song an element of useableness in the divine service. And praying in the Holy Ghost must have such a meaning as that. The Holy Spirit takes possession of the mind and spirit of the believer, so that in prayer it is He who prays. He, who is the Breath of God, becomes the breath of our lives. Inspiring us with the needs of God, He interprets to God the desires of our hearts. Oneness with Him leads to the most real identity, and the indwelling Spirit coming from God, uniting us to Him, so encircles us with His presence that we are kept in His own created atmosphere for the work of prayer.

I

A beautiful word closes the scriptural benediction, "The . . . communion or fellowship (*koinonia*) . . . of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. xiii. 14). It implies participation with Him in what He imparts, as well as in what He seeks to do. What is the gift He bestows upon us? "And, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). The very same spirit of prayer that dwells in the Son is imparted to each child of the new birth, issuing, through his obedience, in a steady development of the prayer consciousness. The more, therefore, we put ourselves in the way of receiving the Holy Spirit, the more shall we participate in His gifts.

Now, this fellowship is not in any way a matter of mere selfish enjoyment, or even of personal enrichment; for the mark of the Spirit, sent forth by God into the hearts of His children, is stated by the Apostle to be that of "crying" (*krazein*=to cry urgently, in anguish. Cf. Mark v. 5).

Our Lord declared that the dispensation of the Spirit would be distinguished by a power in prayer hitherto unknown. Intimacy with the Holy Spirit causes the believer to see with His eyes the need of the world, and understand with His mind the yearning of God over it. The prayer sense thus created finds its burden lifted only at the Throne of Grace.

To produce on the spirits of believers the same sense of urgency as is on the heart of the Holy Spirit Himself is the purpose of this communion. To pray in the Holy Ghost is to know the meaning of prayer, such as burns with divine passion.

But more than that is implied by fellowship. The same Greek word is used in Rom. xv. 26 to denote a "contribution" made in behalf of the needy. A true insight is thus given us into the divine scheme of prayer, for fellowship with the Holy Spirit, without question, requires some contribution from each believer in this partnership, to make it work out to great, God-glorifying issues in the fullest redemption of man.

1. *The Greek preposition "en" carries with it the signification of rest.* Are we in such a spiritual relationship with the blessed Spirit of God as is here indicated, or does He reveal points in our lives where He cannot but have controversy with us? To hold our place in holy fellowship demands that we shall be on right terms with Him. Fellowship can materialize in fruitful service only if our hearts are at rest in Him.

Prayer in the Holy Ghost is not the reservation only of the devotional hour. It must be the accompaniment of daily life and walk, the natural result of oneness with Christ, and of His supremacy in our hearts. Any matter of controversy must erect barriers, which will prove their existence in prayerlessness, or in a spasmodic prayer life, marked by the absence of the even flow of a deep, strong, full prayer-experience. On what we are and how we

live, therefore, depends our closeness of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and our power in prayer.

"It is," writes Dr. Andrew Murray, "living in the Spirit that fits for praying in the Spirit. It is abiding in Christ that gives the right and power to ask what we will. The extent of the abiding is the exact measure of the power in prayer. It is the Spirit dwelling within us that prays, not in words and thoughts always, but in a breathing and a being, deeper than utterance. Just so much as there is of Christ's Spirit in us is there real prayer. Our lives, our lives, oh, let our lives be full of Christ, and full of His Spirit, and the wonderfully unlimited promises to our prayer will no longer appear strange."

2. *For free and unrestrained fellowship with the Holy Ghost we must learn to watch His leading.* A mark of filial relationship with Him, and, therefore, surely of the spirit that strengthens true co-operation, is made very clear by St. Paul, as he writes, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14).

In the life of the Apostle frequent illustrations are given of the necessity and benefit of this attitude of watchfulness. There are at least two ways in which the Spirit of God leads in carrying out the purposes of redemption. He prohibits action and shuts a door: or He permits an advance and summons to a definite work (Acts xvi. 7-10).

The door, which blocked the intended tour into Asia and Bithynia, opened into Europe, and the

divine plan culminated in a rich spiritual experience for St. Paul and the growing Church of God.

Among direct results of St. Paul's obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit can be traced: the conversion of Lydia (Acts xvi. 15), the Lord's first disciple in Europe; the conviction and salvation of the Philippian jailer (xvi. 33); the awakening among the Bereans to the study of the Scriptures (xvii. 11); Athens, with its trophies of Dionysius, Damaris, and others (xvii. 34); the burning of the books of evil at Ephesus as an outcome of the preaching of the gospel (xix. 19). All these different victories for the Lord Jesus through a shut door!

How often similar prohibitions and permissions have been the guiding hand for a servant of the Lord to the eternal enriching of lives! Livingstone's goal was China; God's purpose was Central Africa. Carey looked out with a burdened heart toward the Great Polynesia in the South Seas, and yet it was to India that his steps were directed, to give to its differing races the Word of Life: and that wonderful empire is open to-day to the gospel and the missionary, because of the obedience of Carey to the heavenly vision. Judson determined to devote his strength to India. He became, instead, the Apostle to the Burmese.

No less incumbent is it on each worker in the field of service now to watch the movements of the Holy Spirit, and not seldom through common means does He direct attention to them, calling the labourer to some path of duty. Fellowship with

Him in prayer produces spirit-sensitiveness, making the mind keen in its power of perception. To know with assurance the leading of the Spirit of Light, there must needs be the gathering around us of an atmosphere of quiet and devotion, in which it will become possible for Him to lay a true impression upon the mind, and give intelligent convictions as to right action.

An inner chamber is essential for intimate acquaintance with the workings of the Holy Spirit, as it is for effective witness in the outside world. Aggressive prayer must always depend for its power and fruitfulness upon the reality and constancy of closet devotion. Knowledge of divine methods for the service of each moment can never be so perfectly gained as when the spirit of the believer invades the "secret place of the Most High." It is there we find it easy to believe, without the shadow of a doubt, in the "infinite fatherliness and faithfulness of God," understanding the mind of Christ, and entering into such oneness with the Holy Ghost that, as we pray, it is He who prays in and through us.

3. *Fellowship of the heart claims another attitude from us, and that is one of right sympathy with the Holy Spirit in His aims.* A consideration of this reveals another word in the New Testament which enables us to understand the meaning of praying in the Holy Ghost.

That word is *metochos*, literally signifying "a going along with" (Heb. vi. 4). The aim of the Spirit of God manifestly is a partnership between

Himself and the believer. Why has He come to the Church? In one word, but an all-embracing one: to make Christ pre-eminent in the life of the Christian on earth, and eventually over the universe of His Father, to the ages of the ages.

Necessarily, such a work implies uncompromising, sleepless resistance to sin and Satan, accompanied by the energizing of every force of righteousness to the end that He may crown the plan of God with success. For that He requires the co-operation of the believer. Of this partnership, two views are presented to us.

On the *divine side* there is a demand for alliance with the powers of redeemed man (John xv. 26, 27). If prayer is to be answered, if the object of Christian service is to be realized, and if God is to see the fruit of Calvary, this co-operation cannot be withheld.

Without it, the link is absent which alone can impart to the believer power, and enable the Holy Spirit to fulfil the purpose of the Lord. Failure to recognize the importance of this tempts us to act as if the sole responsibility for answering prayer or accomplishing work rested on the Holy Spirit.

Co-operation, therefore, calls for a watching attitude on our part (Col. iv. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 13).

To pray without watching is to act like a general who in war has no intelligence corps. To watch the movements of men, the schemings of evil, the current of present-day life in the Church and the world, is to learn how to pray, and reinforce God

at the points on the spiritual battle-field where He most needs prayer. To watch is to keep very close to the Holy Spirit, recognizing the impressions He lays upon us.

A growing experience of Christian life will cause one to realize that the Holy Spirit acts by certain definite principles. To carry them to fruition, He asks of us a true partnership, a watchful co-operation of our minds with the Word of God, of our wills with His plans, of our faith with His power, of our influence with His need.

In acting in this manner we discover that on *the human side* this partnership guarantees that we shall not be alone in conflict or work. The promise of God (Phil. i. 19) assures us of everything necessary for fully carrying out the contract.

II

Prayer for the removal of personal infirmity (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9) was not answered according to the expectation of the Apostle, but greater results were promised than could have been the outcome of a literal response to his cry. In accepting the divine method of his deliverance, St. Paul discovered the more abundant answer to his supplication, as well as the reason for his trial. "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

For three full weeks Daniel mourned at the River Hiddekel. At the right moment was given him the explanation for God's delay in answering

his prayer. And in virtue of his partnership with God, he was admitted into the divine secrets and recognized the wonderful connection between his intercession and the meeting of national and world-wide needs: "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself . . . thy words were heard. . . . Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people . . ." (Dan. x. 12, 14).

Wait on the Lord. . . . "neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isa. lxiv. 4).

"Only be still, and wait His leisure
In cheerful hope, with heart content
To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
And all-discerning love have sent;
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who chose us for His own."

III

In the desire of self to be sufficient lie possibilities of peril. To prevent the plan of God being hindered, the Holy Spirit continually reveals Himself as the Spirit of the Cross. The effectiveness of the prayer partnership springs from our submission to His loving, tender scrutiny and our obedience to His vision of truth.

To dig deep into character, and uncover every trace of the self-life, is to cause our fellowship with Him to prove its value. The Holy Spirit, with His knowledge of the mind and purposes of God, as with His vision of the goal, seeks through the

constancy of love to reach the centre of our beings, and readjust the whole view of life until it harmonizes with the divine desire.

Where self in any degree exists, uncrucified and untrammelled, it must colour thought, and influence motive with an effect that will be felt in the closet and made apparent in the service. And thus the Holy Spirit seeks to introduce a new power to us, teaching us to apply the efficacy of the death of Christ to each self-manifestation, thereby making room for the Lord to plant at the centre the force which belongs to His risen life, enabling us to resist the seductions of the old nature, and lead our lives moment by moment in agreement with the Holy Spirit.

If we are to be prayer partners with Him, we dare not shirk the Cross, but allow the Spirit of God to make its power real in us from the core of life to the circumference of act and influence.

The efficacy of the work of Christ will keep us in a union with God that will reflect its power in character and testimony, and prayer will be permeated by divine help and vitality. It will, on the other hand, become lifeless and unavailing unless the forces belonging to the natural man are dominated by the Spirit, through the inworking of that spiritual might which was revealed at Calvary.

As we permit the Holy Spirit to govern and guide our wills and thoughts, self will recede from its place of asserted mastery, and Christ Himself will grow in pre-eminence, while the atmosphere in which we shall find ourselves moving and praying

will be filled with the unfailing inspirations of God.

To pray in the Holy Ghost will be a joyous experience, assuming fresh attractions and revealing hitherto unknown springs of victory. Let us keep the windows of the soul open towards the City of God, and the Breath, that touched the upper room with "Pentecostal grace," will diffuse His presence through the temple of our beings, and our Spirit-pervaded hearts will rise again to the Throne of heaven, in communion with the Most High, where He will speak to us His secrets, and send us out, stimulated and furnished anew for a work of intercession for men and a witness to them of the reality of a Father, a Saviour, a Helper in the work of the day.

CHAPTER V

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

"What various hindrances we meet
In coming to the mercy seat!
Yet who, that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?"

"When ye make many prayers, I will not hear."—ISA. i. 15.

"And when ye stand praying, forgive."—MARK xi. 25.

"PRAYER," wrote William Law, "is the divinest exercise the heart of man can be engaged in"; and the late Mr. Gladstone called it "the highest exercise of the human intellect." It is, as well, the great strategic point in the work to which a believer is summoned.

"The whole question of our life," said the late Rev. E. H. Hopkins, "depends on it being full of prayer." Our value to God, as channels through which the Holy Spirit operates, and to man, as witnesses of what God is able to do in and for us, springs largely from our conception of the place and purpose of prayer in Christian experience and service.

And, while prayer stands in a very close relationship to the plans of God, it is essential to recognize that it has a most definite and strategic bearing upon the whole satanic system. As children of God, and witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ, our

ability to defeat the schemes of Satan and block the way of the forces of evil is drawn from the prayer spirit that, in alliance with the Holy Ghost, works to translate the victory won by Christ on the Cross into an actual power on the battle-field of life. Prayer is neither a sentiment nor a theory: it is a working instrument, which is to do certain things in behalf of righteous causes and in opposition to evil.

We need not, therefore, be surprised to find various obstacles in our way to restrain the act of prayer, to weaken desire for it, to interfere with its spirit, to create false influences in relation to it, and to prevent it being answered.

To understand, in measure, these possible hindrances is imperative, if prayer is to become a potent and effectual force in the work of God. And Holy Scripture does not veil the truth, nor make light of the weaknesses of man and the stratagems of Satan, as it focuses attention upon the temptations in the path of the intercessor.

There are many references in the Word of God to these hindrances, which are worthy of our most careful study. A few of them are mentioned: 1 Sam. viii. 18; Ps. lxvi. 18; Mal. iii. 10; Matt. vi. 5; Matt. vi. 7; Jas. i. 6; Ephes. vi. 18. On the meaning and method of resisting these hindrances the Cross throws light and indicates deliverance from them.

1. *Disinclination to accept the will of God*: 1 Sam. viii. 18. It was more than that with the children of Israel, for their demand for a king marked their

dethronement of God as Sovereign, with its inevitable consequences of weakness and sorrow. It is evident that, from the beginning of human history, the prime temptation of Satan has been to excite within the believer's heart a similar aversion to God's government of life, and incite him to claim independence and self-mastery. And intensely subtle are the methods by which this claim may be presented to even a devout mind. In the most ingenious and plausible ways does the tempter divert the spirit from practical and glad acceptance of the plan of God.

Now, what is the reminder of the Cross? By the death of Christ the obligation resting upon the Christian is that of intelligent obedience to the divine will (Rom. vi. 16). Redemption carries with it the demand for subjection, not forced, but free and filial. Disobedience necessarily excludes that unity of spirit with God which is essential for hallowed and enriching communion.

To be at variance with His will, and at such variance as to dispute with Him the right to the mastership of life, is to find prayer restrained in its spirit and unanswered in its petition. The folly of Israel warns us of the peril of permitting into thought and act any force that creates an unwillingness to do the will of God.

2. *A refusal to face wrong things in life:* Ps. lxvi. 18. The New Testament complement of this Old Testament statement is Col. iii. 1-5. Calvary is God's touchstone for testing everything in regard to Christian living. It has a wonderful faculty for

unearthing sins and weights which stand in His way of answering prayer, and bringing them into clear light.

No gain, but real loss, accrues from glossing over the presence of evil, and progress in Christian life is impossible until wrong is righted. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." To regard iniquity has, in Hebrew thought, the significance of giving respect to it. If I permit sin to lodge in my heart—and no sin can do so without my consent—if I side with it, and do not rather resist it, if I do not judge and condemn and cast it out, then the Word of God loses its edge, and prayer, restrained, loses its effectiveness.

That restraint must be removed. And the assurance which the death of Christ affords us in the prayer life is that, as we honestly recognize sin and mortify it, do it to death by resisting and laying it aside, the Cross, on the one hand, robs it of its power to continue, and, on the other, sets in motion desires which aim after God and the things of the Throne.

3. *The absence of sincere, honest action in response to the claims of Redeeming Love:* Mal. iii. 10. The influence of such action on prayer does not perhaps meet with the consideration due to it, but, in striking language, the Old Testament prophet declares this to be one of God's fundamental principles for life: that our receiving depends, if not on the measure, at least on the honesty of our giving.

What is the measurement of a tithe so as to

make possible the outpouring of divine gifts in fulness? (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). That is the interpretation of the prophet's words by St. Paul, as he stands in the full light of revelation. Calvary is God's assertion that, as a sinner comes to the Cross, accepting the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ claims the whole redeemed man. The sinner's possession of the gift of God's love is his confession of the justice of that claim. The value of the tithes of our lives is computed according to the standard of the Cross, and God's solemn promise is repeated in different words by the Saviour, in the gospel: "Give, and it shall be given unto you." The acknowledgment of these claims removes the obstacle to answered prayer.

Where the believer allows himself to be imprisoned in a cage of selfishness, unresponsive to the divine claims, the windows of heaven remain closed. An honest answer to the call of God, in virtue of the love-sacrifice of His Son, will reveal Him as true and faithful. Heaven will empty out its best on our lives, and we shall have cause to praise God for liberty in prayer and power in service.

4. *Unworthiness of motive in what is asked*: Matt. vi.

5. The reason for the prayer of the hypocrite was, that the eyes of men might be directed upon him. Self-praise and self-interest impelled him to the outward act of seeming devotion.

By equally unworthy motives may the prayer life of the Christian be influenced and spoiled. To gratify a personal desire, to make the circum-

stance of life easier, to give to service a success causing others to envy or praise, all such motives have their source in the self-life, which, unless remedied at the Cross, must wither up the real spirit of prayer. Only as we give permission to the Holy Spirit to rule in us can these motives be dealt with, and guidance assured in purity of thought and desire, which will make possible the answer of God.

5. *Words without heart*: Matt. vi. 7. Very emphatic is the statement of Christ that this must form a distinct impediment to the prayer life, and weaken its activities. True prayer does not consist in words. It is not mere lip devotion or a recital of religious phrases. "In prayer," said Bunyan, "it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

Sometimes prayer seems little more than a duty, which custom forbids to neglect: at other times it is something like a penance, for which a stricken conscience cries out, to salve it, or quieten its reproaches. If the Holy Spirit dwells within us, our prayers will be coloured by His visions, and sometimes they may indeed be as "groanings that cannot be uttered."

Now, what is the message of the New Testament in the presence of this hindrance and in the light of the Cross? "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Cor. iv. 20). That kingdom, coming in our hearts, as the result of the Sacrifice on the Tree, proves its existence by its power to create in our spirits, in the thoughts of

our minds, and in the expression of our lives, perfect, undisguised reality.

The Cross is the sworn foe of insincerity, one of the most common manifestations of the old Adam nature. And we may be assured that the tempter, knowing the value of prayer, will put forth every power to make prayer nothing more than a repetition of words. In his success is mirrored the failure of prayer in its purpose and result.

“ Lips near to God, and ranging heart within,
Is but vain babbling, and converts to sin.”

6. *No real conviction regarding what is asked :*
Jas. i. 6. Is this not frequently a temptation, and when yielded to presents a check to the development of a true spirit of prayer? A waverer can never find soul-touch with the Throne of Grace, but he will most probably find himself “in the secret ambush of a specious prayer.”

To criticize our prayers, to take our petitions and subject them to searching tests, is good and wise. Do I really want what I have sought? Is it for the glory of God that I have asked it? Am I sure that I cannot get on in life without it? Am I persuaded that the want of it would mean a great lack for God and for myself? Am I willing to pay whatever price God deems necessary for obtaining the answer to my petition? or am I a formalist on my knees?—for what is formalism but speech without conviction?

How defective are the qualities of our communion with God! Infirmary of vision betrays itself at

every step. The temporal bulks more largely in our minds than the eternal, and we are often asking for toys when we should be in an agony of longing for crowns.

Want of deep soul-conviction, as to the reality of the tremendous battle which has to be fought out in the onward march of God's purposes, injects weakness into our supplications and intercessions. And this poverty of vision is partnered, so often, by paralysis of desire! How hollow at times are our prayers! How small our sense of the supreme importance of what hangs on prayer and God's ability to answer it! Duncan Matheson, the stonemason revivalist of 1859 and 1860, with a passion for God and sinners burnt into him at the Cross, could pray, "Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs," and his vision and his love sent him out in that spirit to ask miracles of God and perform miracles through the grace of God.

We need to see God, to know God, to discover the qualities in God that made Him, in the person of His beloved Son, pray in the garden, "being in an agony," before we can pray with deep conviction of the need of the world and the indubitable power of divine love to meet it, and with an unshakable, victorious faith in the conquering Lord of glory.

There is but one place in the universe where such convictions can be borne and forged into our characters, and that is "the place called Calvary." Whenever we come there, willing that the purpose of God should be wrought out in us, the conviction necessary to transform prayer into a great heart-

reality will be created, and the words of the Lord will come to us with a new meaning: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22).

7. *Relaxing the spirit and act of prayer*: Eph. vi. 18. St. Paul points out the danger in his advice to the Church at Ephesus, "Be watchful, with all perseverance in prayer."

The strain of the conflict, the demands made upon the nervous system, the suggestion of the devil to take things a little easier, and many other similar temptations, tend to cause a flagging of spirit, and a relaxation in the effort needful to carry on the work of God to victory. And the message of the Lord, crucified and risen, is, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. iv. 2). His continual, unwearied intercession before the Throne is a call to us to join Him in such a prayer-partnership as will defeat the aims of Satan, and crown the work of the Cross with triumph. Remembering, and never forgetting, that we are on a battle-field, opposed by a foe, fierce, implacable, persistent, but withal encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses, the spirit of Nehemiah is required to take possession of each of us, "Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them" (iv. 9).

Let us not shut our eyes to the perils of the present, but recognizing that no force of evil will for a moment be relaxed in an endeavour to thwart divine plans, let us be fully persuaded that the

only path of safety lies in constant obedience to the Holy Spirit.

As He keeps us close to the Cross to work out in us its mighty redeeming and sanctifying purpose, we shall find that He keeps us also in touch with the Throne, to receive, in unrestrained fulness, the life and power, the wisdom and grace of our risen, conquering, and coming Lord.

CHAPTER VI

CONSTRAINTS TO PRAYER

“ Man’s plea to man is, that he nevermore
Will beg, and that he never begged before ;
Man’s plea to God is, that he did obtain
A former suit, and therefore sues again.
How good a God we serve, that, when we sue,
Makes His old gifts the examples of His new ! ”

“ But it is good for me to draw near to God.”—Ps. lxxiii. 28.

IN His Word God presents us with many gracious promises in respect to prayer, and reveals strong reasons why we should “stand in the gap,” training ourselves to be His partners in the greatest service that can ever be rendered by man.

I

“ What God wills to accomplish on earth needs prayer as its indispensable condition ” (Dr. A. Murray). Deep as are the mysteries which surround the whole fact of prayer, its place, nevertheless, in the plan of God is perfectly clear. However little we can understand its marvellous operations throughout the world, in individual lives, in the unseen spiritual realm, and in the very presence of God, life gives abundant proof of its necessity and vitality.

The prayers of His children are requisite to the accomplishment of His works of love. In this co-operation with God there is the tendency on our part to over-emphasize the value, or even the need, of an answer to prayer. So eager are we to walk by sight, that what we call unanswered prayer becomes often a depression for the spirit, and a difficulty for faith to meet. To many the answer is the whole of the prayer.

The late Rev. E. H. Hopkins, in words of Spirit-inspired wisdom and helpfulness, wrote that "when you pray, you swell the tide of divine power which operates on events that are taking place around us. You may think that the chief thing is to get answer to prayer . . . but there are plans of God fulfilled through prayer higher and beyond all this."

The value of our devotional life is not to be expressed by the answers to our petitions we may expect or get, but by the spirit and the continuance of the act of prayer.

The need of God is for believers who will pray. The answers are safe. They will be given. They will never disappoint us. But are we disappointing Him through the selfishness of our prayer life, and the materialism of our prayer spirit?

Never are we more in harmony with the divine will than when we are found in the attitude of prayer. But we shall not find it easy to pray, or maintain the spirit of prayer, for experience teaches us the truth of words, uttered centuries ago by John Livingstone, minister of Ancrum, in Scotland :

“Satan strikes aye at the root of faith, or at the root of diligence.”

II

St. Luke, who specially unveils the humanity of our Lord, records instances of His prayerfulness on at least ten occasions, amid different circumstances. The hidden life with His Father was the secret of His wonderful life before the world. “Christ-like praying in secret will be the secret of Christ-like living in public.”

III

“If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it” (John xiv. 14).

Is not God waiting for such a spirit of triumphant faith as this to pour out spiritual blessing? On the value and work of prayer He places a great premium, by telling us that there is simply nothing the believer cannot get, if he will ask for it in the Name of His well-beloved Son.

When Alexander Peden, one of the chief heroes of Scottish Covenanting days, was passing through Clydesdale, he met one whom he knew, and said to her, “How fares it with ye in these evil days? Is it well wi’ ye?” “Ay,” she replied, “it is well, better far wi’ me than in the days lang syne. I get mair out of one verse of His Holy Word than I used to get out of the world, for He has flung aside the keys of His pantry and bidden me tak’ my fill (take all I need).” Into the hands of His children

He has placed the keys of His treasure-house, and He bids us "tak' our fill."

"What is the secret of this revival?" one asked a prominent Welshman, as the Spirit of God moved through the Principality. "There is no secret. It is only ask and receive." And, when the late Dr. Andrew Bonar, of Glasgow, was requested to reveal the secret of sixty years of Christian living, his answer was, "I did nothing but receive."

"Good gifts from out His ever-open hand
On everything around are freely thrown;
And thinkest thou, O heart, He will withstand
Thy prayer alone?
O men and women, saddened in the living,
Smiles on the lip, and sorrow in the heart,
Open your souls more fully for receiving,
Accept your part."

IV

The whole provision, divinely made for effectiveness in the daily conflict, is especially related to prayer (Eph. vi. 12-18). To be in partnership with the risen, interceding Christ is the great call of the Cross to each believer, for whatever else we may not be fitted to accomplish, we *can* pray. God's supreme need in His Church can be answered by the weakest Christian. Prayer is our business. It sums up the service we have been redeemed to render.

"Prayer is my chief work," said Hooker, the Puritan, "and it is by means of it that I carry on the rest." Coleridge described it as "the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare upon earth."

Power in any other sphere depends on the place given to prayer. If it be pushed into a corner, then, visibly, will the spiritual life diminish, and the ministry of the Word become ineffective. The late Dr. Andrew Murray writes of a "Prayer Hero" as one who, through all circumstances of living or serving, takes care to hold fast and use the weapon of prayer.

In days of increasing difficulty and strain, the most pressing need of the Church is Prayer Heroes, who have caught the right vision of redemption, and in the strength which the Holy Spirit imparts, by the victory of the Cross, are learning to stand, in God, against the hosts of evil.

V

More things have been wrought for God and His Church through prayer than by any other form of Christian service. It still retains its marvellous power. How can it be made a working force in our experience?

1. *It is essential to remember that all prayer is to be offered up in the Name of Jesus.* A careful study of the Acts of the Apostles will make plain that this Name stands for everything the Word of God declares Christ can be to, and do for, us. It breathes His authority, which proceeds not only from the fact of His deity, but from the complete victory He has won over sin and Satan.

To pray, therefore, in the Name of Jesus is to ask that that victory will be made real and full in

regard to everything we need, and seek for the glory of God and the destruction of every force of evil which has been released to hinder the work of God.

2. *We need to recognize what are the most essential elements in the strategy of prayer.* Do we not, in the prayer life, require to understand that there is, without doubt, spiritual strategy to be learned and used? The man who fails to make himself acquainted with the rules of a game or the principles of a business would speedily find himself set aside. Is Christian life haphazard in its practice? Is the conflict with evil a mere bagatelle? Are we likely to win it if we enter into it with eyes blindfolded, ignorant of the methods of the enemy and of our own resources?

There are two principal elements in the strategy of prayer. *The first is unhurried communion.* To take time to examine a spiritual situation in the presence of God is the initial condition for making prayer effective.

In the great warfare of Christian witness, quietness of spirit is demanded to develop a true, vigorous, healthy prayer force, and prevent the nervous strain which so frequently brings to an end the service of a believer.

In an address to students, Sir Hugh Allen, a director of the Royal College of Music, London, said: "We are constantly in danger of being in a hurry. Every new invention seems to be devoted to the saving of time, and yet we seem to have less of it every year. The result is, we become

more and more restless, and have not the time to devote to quiet contemplation of things, which, after all, is the only means of gaining stability and wisdom. The danger of this age is hurrying--making short cuts, trying to run before we can walk."

These words befit the necessities of the spiritual realm as truly as they do those of the musical or business world. In Christian life the peril is to be always "on the move," especially in relation to prayer. To be hurried, either in word or act, is never a sign of the leading of the Spirit of God, but it is not the least effective of satanic strategies in the spiritual conflict. To push the believer to speech or effort, without giving time for prayer to see the way of God, is one of his favourite stratagems. And many tragedies, great and small, in Christian experience are caused by the driving force of the devil.

It will never be unwise to suspect every impulse to act on the spur of the moment, and to take time to catch the right vision of the matter which concerns us. "God works slowly," as Bishop Westcott wrote. Never in a hurry, the unresting, and yet unwearied, God waits long to complete His preparation. Then, in due season, He finishes the work of ages in a moment. In a material struggle it is imperative to have a council of war, when plans for offence or defence are prepared. In every Church and association of workers, God needs to find His staff, who can enter into consultation with Him, and in His light see light.

The other element in the strategy of prayer is to discover what Dr. Andrew Murray has called "the storm centre on the battlefield." To find that out, in a life or a work, is the condition of victory. What it may be will be revealed by the Holy Spirit in the spiritual Council Chamber. When light breaks on it, prayer must be focused upon it, and definite steps taken to stop the power of the devil, and bring the whole situation within the sphere of the Cross, through the might of the Holy Spirit.

3. *We must be ready to pay the price of answered prayer.* The "storm centre" in the believer must be gained by God ere He can give what is asked. The price of effective prayer is to be paid at the Cross. To that place we must come with unveiled lives, willing to face whatever the Holy Spirit may reveal. As we yield to His earnest, keen searchings, to His tender, gracious pleadings, He will teach us what is meant by being crucified with Christ, entering into fellowship with Him through His death, and losing our lives to find them again as we follow the Lamb.

To resort continually to the Cross is the persuasion of the Holy Spirit. It is the deepest secret of Pentecost. It is His purpose to work out in each "Prayer Hero" the same spirit of the Cross as was visible in Christ Himself. To reveal Jesus Christ to us as the Lamb that was slain, and to give us, through the channel of faith and obedience, the life of the Lamb, is His way of bringing us to the place where humbly, but truthfully, we can say,

“ I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live : yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The Christian who is a prayer partner with God will pay many a visit to Calvary, to imbibe its spirit, and respond to its claim. Entering into the meaning of the Cross, we shall be constrained to be men and women of prayer.

CHAPTER VII

THE CREATION OF A PRAYER HERO

“ O Thou to whose all-searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart : it pants for Thee ;
Oh, burst these bands, and set it free ! ”

“ Behold, he prayeth.”—ACTS ix. 11.

THE greatest need of the Church is to know how to pray. The most common fact regarding life is conflict, even in a sheltered environment ; and prayer is the believer's weapon in it amid ordinary circumstances. If the work of God is to be marked by success, it will be due to prayer. If the schemes of Satan are brought to naught, it will be in the measure in which the children of God are entering into the meaning and value of prayer. If the Church is to be revived and made strong for coming warfare, it will be through each believer discovering the laws of prayer, and putting them into practice. “ The Church in the wilderness was saved by one who shadowed forth our great divine Intercessor and partook of His Spirit ” (“ Praying Hyde ”).

Referring to the days spent by St. Paul “ in the street which is called Straight,” in Damascus, Dr. F. B. Meyer writes that “ during those wondrous hours God unveiled secrets which had been kept in silence through times eternal, but were manifested to him, according to the commandment of the eternal God, that he might make them known unto

all nations unto obedience of faith." Was it not this unveiling that began the work of making the Apostle "a pattern to them who should hereafter believe," not only of the mercy of God in salvation, but of the power of God to create a prayer hero?

"Behold, he prayeth!" Was that a surprise to Heaven? Saul of Tarsus must have been a man of prayer, at stated hours, for the Jews were pre-eminently a religious, devotional people, and Saul was, on his own confession, strict in obedience to the Law. But, in his solitary chamber in Damascus, something had happened to make prayer different. It suddenly changed from a mere legal formality, that found no answering echo at the Throne of God, to a spiritual force which drew the Lord to him and moved things. And the divine message to Ananias was God's signal that the Cross had won the victory in a man who would be a "chosen vessel" to carry the water of life to "the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." Henceforth Paul would "bow his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the preparation of his prayer life we may see the forces and influences that have been set in motion by the Hand of love in order to fashion and mould us in a like manner.

I

The first step to the fulfilment of God's plan with St. Paul was this: he had a vision which brought him to his knees." (Acts ix. 4, 5.)

It was the vision of the glorified Christ. Much more than a conversion from Judaism to Christianity

was the result. It brought Paul to the end of himself, and made Christ supreme in his life. It prepared the way for a witness to Jews and Gentiles, and for writings to the Church, which in all ages have made his power felt. It ordained him to be the great herald of the message of Calvary.

Conversion is only the opening of the gate into a new life. The vision of the Cross, and the Crucified One, is necessary to stamp us as prayer heroes. Not only to bring us as sinners to God, but to effect in character the purpose of the death of Christ, is the mission of the Holy Spirit, for in no other way can we discover the path of victory over sin and self and every other antagonist to righteousness. As the power of the Cross, through the Holy Spirit, to deal with every form of the old nature increases, the purer will be the spirit of prayer within us, the closer our union with Christ. "The life that can pray effectually is the life of the cleansed branch, the life that knows deliverance from the power of self" (Andrew Murray).

II

As St. Paul carried on his Lord's work, numbering in each place, where he preached the Gospel, converts to the Saviour, a sense of the insufficiency of mere conversion caused his ministry to be impregnated with a spirit of prayer.

He understood the need of having young believers established in the Christian life, and his prayers form rich examples for us in our relation to others (Eph. i. 15, iii. 14; Phil. i. 9-11; Col. i. 9-11; 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13, v. 23).

Experience in Christian service teaches us the necessity of such an attitude and ministry. With a sinner led to Christ, the work is not finished. It is only begun. The weakness of much evangelical preaching lies in the absence of proper instruction for those who have responded to the words of the evangelist. There are evangelistic addresses with little of the message of the Cross in them, and the results which follow are too often marked and marred by a lack of permanency and reality.

The evangelistic message should surely be as well a teaching message. Otherwise there cannot but be an evaporation of power. Amusing talk, sensational and theatrical stories, emotional appeals, psychic influences, pressure for some outward sign of decision, have brought weakness and not strength into aggressive Christian endeavour.

The mania for counting heads or hands or cards is productive of sad consequences. On occasions of further service that seek to present the claims of Christ and lead lives to His Cross, a not uncommon cynical criticism is made: "Oh, I have gone through it all, and there is nothing in it." When one is brought to the acceptance of the Saviour he needs to be shown the way, and surrounded with prayer that his faltering steps may be guided aright.

What is conversion? Only a birth, a beginning, an opening of the soul's eye Godward. But what is the life that follows conversion? An experience of constant demands, of perplexing problems, of testing difficulties, of perils and snares and assaults.

The greatest need of to-day, as in the age of

Paul, is prayer, environing the believer with powers that strengthen him for resistance to evil, and guide him into the secret of victory, establishing his faith, and adding spiritual values to his character.

III

The place of the Apostle in the Body of Christ made prayer a necessity to him. (1 Thess. v. 25 ; 2 Thess. i. 11.)

The unity of the Spirit caused him to recognize his dependence on others for prayer, as it assuredly created in himself a desire for intercession in their behalf.

The sense of our oneness in the Body of Christ, and not our isolation, is a strong element in the development of the prayer life.

Every organ of the physical frame is in league with every other organ. Each one has its own peculiar province and vocation, and yet is ever ready to be joined to the others at the same moment in offence and defence. In like manner are the members of the Body of Christ linked together, that the need of one is only truly met by the co-operation of another ; and the bond which unites them and enables the will of the Head to be carried out is prayer, the prayer that takes up the burden of another, as if it were personal. "God loves unity," said the late Dr. Andrew Bonar, "and so He loves a united cry, a petition signed by more than one."

To have a prayer partner in carrying on the conflict with evil becomes a source of spiritual re-

invigoration. To remember that in the uttermost parts of the earth are fellow-labourers of the Lord, fighting the same battle, burns into us a sense of the realities of a Christ-called service, and forces out of our spirits that power of prayer which helps to knit in increasing closeness the members of His Body.

IV

His sorrows revealed to St. Paul the need and value of prayer. (1 Cor. xii. 9.)

When a believer is driven to his knees by the weight of a sorrow, prayer grows in power. Conflicts, fought out in loneliness, often in desperation of spirit, prove turning-points in Christian history, and a new vantage-ground from which the Lord Jesus sends forth His tested one to witness, in the freshness of the spiritual power gained in the darkness.

Those who count for God in the struggle against evil have dwelt, like Paul, for some time in a street called Straight, or, like the Lord Himself, have spent an hour in a Gethsemane. Sorrows, which are our familiar attendants, bring enriching ingredients into character. When they arouse the spirit of prayer, that breaks in a heart-cry at the Throne, the believer finds himself fighting through to a place where he is taken into the secrets of the Lord, and shown the inner meaning of trial and test, even though the answer to his prayer reaches him in a strange and unexpected way.

To Paul came sore grief through the fear that a

personal infirmity might clog his steps, as it touched him also by the desertion of friends and the bitter animosity of foes. But, in the darkened chamber of pain, and perhaps disappointment, he saw his Lord in a new light. That vision, with a more wholesome understanding of divine guidance, enriched his ministry with a finer fragrance of spirit, and gave greater forcefulness to prayer and testimony.

V

Perhaps more than anything else, the sense of opposition to him and his ministry called out a spirit of prayer that found its answer in far-reaching triumphs for his Lord. (Rom. xv. 30, 31 ; 2 Cor. i. 9-11 ; Eph. vi. 12.)

Life for the Apostle was not a fancy or a rose-coloured experience. Paul could dream dreams and see visions, but he could also face facts. He knew that Christianity meant, what Dr. Grenfell of Labrador has termed it, "not an insurance ticket but a call to arms." In the conflict with spiritual foes he learned his own weakness and the power of God, the need of the Church and the might of Satan. To these he never dared shut his eyes.

Nor can we. In the day's life critical battles have to be fought, and prayer is God's weapon to us with which to fight them, the prayer of the man who knows how to put his hand upon the Throne and exercise the power and authority of God, like Moses in Rephidim, the prayer of him who has entered into the secret of the Cross and begun to see the meaning of Christ's finished work, as Paul saw it. Such a man will discover through prayer

the way to the heart of God in devotion, and the way to the conscience of the world in language of conviction.

The Cross not only calls us to fight, but shows as well the ground on which we can stand with every hope of success. "Compel your enemy to fight you on your own drill ground," was a saying of the late Admiral Lord Fisher. Recognizing the truth, that Calvary spells victory, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we learn how to put that victory into practice over natural weaknesses and supernatural evil forces.

Nothing will fill prayer with such reality as to recognize that matters of daily experience can be turned against us in the conflict. Nothing will prove the value of prayer so fully as to understand that the opposition of the powers of evil is not a fiction, that the only provision for victory resides in the crucified and risen Saviour, as the Holy Spirit makes practical in us and through us the power of His triumph on the Cross. May we not be found wanting in the hour when God calls us to stand !

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRAYER BATTLE

"Lord, teach us how to pray !
With prayer to bind the foe,
With prayer to loosen captive souls
For whom Thy blood did flow.
Lord, teach us how to pray !
With prayer to stand our ground,
With prayer to weaken Satan's hold
Where'er his grasp is found."

"We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude."—2 CHRON. xiv. 11.

"We have no might against this great company . . . neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are upon Thee."—2 CHRON. xx. 12.

"Endure . . . as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—2 TIM. ii. 3.

THERE can be no question as to the power of prayer to control situations in which mighty deeds are done, any more than there can be the slightest doubt of its importance in Christian life and work. Scripture abounds with graphic illustrations of prayer battles fought amid the strangest surroundings, proving the might of weakness when allied to God.

The writers of the Bible seem to delight in fixing our gaze upon the difficulties which lie in the way of the people of God—magnifying, almost unnecessarily, the obstacles to deliverance, and then, in the most striking and arresting manner, showing God in

command, issuing orders, discomfiting their enemies, leading them in triumph.

Rephidim was a critical moment for the Hebrew people. To the Amalekite hosts, skilful and brave warriors, there was opposed only an army of escaped slaves. Any chance of victory was ridiculous. And the fighting force of Joshua was the weaker because the spirit of mutiny had broken out among the people. But God was on the scene. And Moses went to the top of the mountain with the rod of God in his hand, symbol of Almighty authority and invincible power. With him went two other men.

All three, more than eighty years of age, began the prayer battle; and the day closed in victory. "The scene," writes the late Dr. Parker, "is full of present mystery and present grace. Mock the suppliants if you will, but they are men engaged in the upper regions of the battle; they are not cowards who have fled from the fight; they are heroes who are standing at its front, and have undertaken the responsibility of its success. May we answer the call of God when challenged to battle, with a heroism that cannot cringe, and with a faith that can only satisfy itself with prayer."

Asa met the shock of a million Ethiopians, but it was in alliance with God. The cry to Heaven for help and succour was not in vain. "The Lord smote the Ethiopians . . . and the Ethiopians fled." Against Jehoshaphat came a great multitude "from beyond the sea." Only one way out into security was open, and he took it. He "set

himself to seek the Lord," and in the wilderness of Tekoa a swordless victory was won, "for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies."

And these Old Testament battles, what are they but the emblems of the great conflict into which the redeemed people of God are called, not with foes of flesh and blood, but with the rulers of the darkness of this world?

On the spiritual battle-field of the present day the Lord Jesus has taken up His position, for the last great conflict has begun, and He is summoning His followers to stand with Him. In prayer is our response. Through prayer we fight the battle. In virtue of the authority which belongs to the crucified, risen Victor of Calvary, we can see situations on earth controlled, forces in the unseen realms moved, changes effected, powers of evil dislodged and routed, and the purposes of grace pressed forward to final triumph.

I

Who can fight this prayer battle?

A very short answer can be given to that question. The New Testament makes clear that the wrestler with the forces of evil must be a spiritual man, for only he can understand the battle and the equipment necessary for it. A carnal Christian begins the fight defeated. A natural man cannot side with God. But what is a spiritual man?

The late Dr. J. Elder Cumming described him as "a man in whom not only his own spirit takes the lead in self-government and discipline, but in

whom the Spirit of God is dwelling in person and power ; and he does this above all : he has been and is 'receiving' the Spirit of God as in control and mastership, redressing the balance of powers within, and through the man's own spirit subordinating all the carnal and worldly, bringing him into conformity with Christ."

His own spirit, gathering to its aid all human faculties, under the government and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, moves out on to the spiritual battle-field, to stand with God, and through prayer make possible the interposition of divine powers to crown with success the work of grace.

II

But where is this prayer battle to be won ?

In the closet, in the quietness of personal communion with God. To be in touch with Him is to come into the light, and to be there is to see what He sees.

Asa routed the Ethiopians in the valley of Zephathah, but the conflict was preceded by cleansing and consecration. National sin was dealt with, and the worship of God restored to its central place. Jehoshaphat saw his enemies in the wilderness of Tekoa utterly destroyed, but not before he and his people had sought the Lord "in the house of the Lord."

The battle against the powers of darkness must be won on the believer's knees. "Brother," wrote Mr. Hudson Taylor to Dr. Goforth, "if you are to

win that province [North Honan], you must go forward on your knees." The closet must give to prayer vitality, and vitality springs from Calvary in action in the believer's life. The fight against the foes of God must be joined to unflinching opposition to all known sin. No minimizing or toleration of personal inherent weakness can be permitted, save at great peril.

If the Cross is not a sanctifying force in the heart, it will give no driving, delivering momentum to the prayer battle in the world. In the measure in which personal identification with Christ in resistance to sin and self is real and deep, will there be victory over the schemes and agencies of Satan. The power of prayer, to effect a spiritual revolution in a church or a nation, depends upon the length we are prepared to go in allowing the Holy Spirit to apply to our own characters the revealing, as well as the sanctifying, force of the Cross.

III

How then is the prayer battle to be fought?

The Word of God reveals at least four great laws of battle which require recognition and obedience.

I. *Claim the protection of God in the prayer life* (Dan. ii. 18).—To enter into active resistance to the forces of evil by prayer means conflict, and all conflict entails physical, mental, and spiritual strain. Danger inevitably follows.

All that Calvary stands for we must claim, while

in prayer we seek to do the work of God. And all must be claimed definitely. To take things for granted in our relationship to God, in such a battle as this, is to find a speedy path to disaster and disillusionment. As we need constantly to seek the Blood to cleanse from sin, so likewise do we require to ask and take by faith the protection of the Cross from the malice of Satan.

Claim protection for the *body* against accident or weakness ; protection for the *mind* against lies or subtle delusions and deceptions ; protection for the *spirit* against the danger of passivity, or a hardness of spirit that affects the attitude to others in the work ; protection for the *will* against a paralysis which leads to non-action of faculties, and opens the way to serious consequences.

Claim the protection of God, through the power of the Cross, as signifying the victory of the Saviour, against *missing strategic points* in service, such as the choice of helpers, or even the selection of hymns, for there can be no trifles in any work for God. Claim that protection against *each scheme of Satan*, against the *direct and indirect attacks* of his forces. Those who have been called to the prayer battle cannot be too careful in asking and taking such wondrous shelter as the precious Blood of the Son of God affords.

2. *Pray with an ever-enlarging vision of the need of the world for God and the need of God for the world* (Acts i. 8).—As the eye of St. Paul was on “the regions beyond,” so must ours be, to lay claim to every land for God, as the Spirit of God lays on

our hearts its burden. The command of the risen Christ is as much to go into all the world and pray as it is to preach the Gospel. Without prayer, preaching halts in its progress and fails in its aim.

3. *Learn to bind the forces of evil* (Matt. xvi. 19). —The words of our Lord are worthy of the most careful consideration by the believer.

They manifestly refer to some divinely bestowed power of infinite value for him in his partnership with Christ on the battle-field. And experience teaches us the truth of the words. Have we not frequently felt the powers of darkness coming down in full force upon the atmosphere to disturb it, to influence minds and souls, to crush the spirit of prayer, and wreck the plans of the Church?

The Lord Jesus Christ assures us they can be met. How? On the ground of His victory over them, and in co-operation with the Holy Spirit, we are permitted to bind these forces, to claim that they shall not be allowed to act out any satanic purpose of evil.

And the Lord says that as we do that on earth, He will answer our action by making these forces of evil powerless to hinder us. It is a work of faith. It is a test of faith. It is a challenge to us to say if we really believe the Lord, and recognize that by His death on the Cross He has conquered Satan and all his hosts.

It is a call to make the prayer battle, begun in the closet, effective in the Church. This law should

be put in force before ever a prayer-meeting is convened or any form of service commenced.

4. *Make sure of the ground on which you stand in opposition to the enemy of God* (2 Chron. xx. 6).—The prayer of Jehoshaphat in the hour of his country's danger rested on very definite grounds. He appealed (1) to the *character* of God: "O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen?" (2) To His *power*: "And in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee?" (3) To His *faithfulness*: "Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend for ever?" (4) To the people's *confidence* in God: "And they dwelt therein, and have built Thee a sanctuary therein for Thy Name." (5) To the *rights* of God: "Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit"; and (6) to their own *weakness*: "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

That appeal was not in vain. The Lord "made them to rejoice over their enemies," and in the valley of Berachah "they blessed the Lord." Is this not a picture of Calvary in the Old Testament, drawn for our learning and encouragement? On what ground can we hope to stand in certainty of

victory, as day by day, in life or work, in home or church, we face the foe ?

Our appeal is to be made to (1) the *character* of God, and at the Cross He declares " His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past " (Rom. iii. 25) ; (2) to the *power* of God as He deals with our need through sin, justifying us by the Blood of His Son (Rom. v. 9) ; and answering for ever the claim of the old creation (Rom. vi. 6). We appeal (3) to His *faithfulness*. For what is the message of the sacrifice of the Saviour ? Is it not this ?—" But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," and in that magnificent climax to the Passion of His Son He proves His unchanging faithfulness (Rom. v. 20, 21) ; we appeal (4) to our *confidence* in Him, for every generation of men has trusted Him, and the Cross has been the pledge that He would not disappoint them (Rom. ix. 33) ; and (5) to the *rights* of God. The message of Calvary to the life that has believed on Him is : " Ye are not your own." The believer is " the peculiar treasure " of the Lord, and in that lies the promise of God to care for and protect him in the hour of battle (Rom. xiv. 9) ; and, finally, we appeal (6) *on the ground of our weakness*, for it was when we were " without strength " that Christ died for us. Apart from Him we have no might, but our eyes are unto Him (Rom. v. 6).

The finished work of Christ is our plea before

the Throne, and our weapon against the enemy. Our right it is in Christ to ask God to bear witness, on the battle-field of life, to the power of the Blood and the effectiveness of the Cross against Satan and all his forces. He will not disappoint us. He cannot fail us.

CHAPTER IX

PREVAILING PRAYER

"Prayer is a creature's strength, his very breath and being.
Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of Mercy.
Prayer is the magic sound that saith to Fate, So be it.
Prayer is the slender nerve that moveth the muscles of Omnipotence."

"Elias prayed earnestly . . . and it rained not . . . the heaven gave rain."—JAS. v. 17, 18.

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—LUKE xviii. 1.

"IN its warfare against sin and Satan," writes Mr. Robert Caldwell, "no weapon at the command of a living and purified Church is more effective than that of All Prayer, and yet how loath we are to use it! . . . Pray more importunately—more perseveringly—pray with a holy violence; 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'"

To pray thus is the possibility before each believer as he fulfils conditions that are necessary and perfectly logical. What is prayer? It is helplessness casting itself upon power; human infirmity leaning on divine strength. And yet, what is prevailing prayer, as the Church of God may know it? Impotence linking itself on to Omnipotence, and finding forces, under the control of God, provided to satisfy a yearning of soul, and

to culminate in some mighty deed that manifests the sovereignty of Jehovah.

“Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not . . . and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain.” John Livingstone spent a whole night with a company of his brethren in prayer for God’s blessing, all of them together besieging the Throne of Grace, and next day, in the churchyard of the Kirk of Shotts, five hundred were converted under his preaching. Some Christians in Massachusetts, New England, had become alarmed lest, while God was blessing other places, He should pass them by. They met on the evening preceding the day when Jonathan Edwards was to preach, and spent the whole night in agonizing prayer. The audience that assembled next day heard Edwards preach on “Sinners in the hands of an angry God,” and was mightily moved. Some of them grasped hold of the pillars of the church where they were gathered, afraid they were actually sliding into the pit.

God requires persevering prayer, gripped by a real spirit of importunity. “Produce your cause, saith the Lord. Bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob” (Isa. xli. 21).

“It is not,” wrote Archbishop Leighton, “the gilded paper and good writing of a petition that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it. And to the King who discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which He only regards. He listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other

excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it. This is the life of it." The moving sense of prayer! The burden on the heart that creates prayer in the spirit! The yearning of the spirit that burns out in fervency of desire! That, as Christmas Evans was wont to say, is the rope that rings the bell in heaven. That makes prayer a power. Shall we not say that gives God something to work with? According to St. James, it is "effectual, fervent prayer" that avails. But what is that fervency of spirit which causes the suppliant to continue in prayer and prevail? It is not physical exertion or vocal strength. It must be the harmony of the believer's life with the purpose of God in grace: the believer getting in such clearness the vision of God's honour, God's claims, God's disappointments, man's peril, and the world's need, that he sets himself in line with God to become a channel for the outflow of the Holy Spirit in conviction and enlightenment and redemption.

Now, how can this harmony of Christian life with the thoughts of God be effected? What are the conditions for prayer service to reach its goal, issuing in expressions of divine power for the accomplishment of the mission of grace? In an Old Testament story there is outlined for us the three-fold requisite for a Christian life that can, even now, belong to the great succession of the saints of God who learned the secret of prevailing prayer. The historical record opens with the words: "And Deborah . . . she judged Israel at that time"

(Judg. iv. 4). It was the time of sore oppression for the people of God by reason of their sin. The need of the hour is described in the opening verse of the song of praise, following the victory (v. 2). "The avenging of Israel" (*Hebrew*, to free the free) was the cause of God's action. Israel, as the redeemed earthly people of Jehovah, had no right to be in bondage. What called forth deliverance?

Heavy upon them was the tyrant hand of the Canaanites, type of evil forces, under Jabin (the Intelligent) and Sisera (battle array, from a root which means to leap forward, to make an onslaught). The need was met by calling (iv. 4) to the place of government Deborah (*Hebrew*, a bee, signifying orderly motion, or activity; from the root, to arrange). But, realizing her inability to accomplish her work, she sent (iv. 6) for Barak (the Light, also the flashing sword), son of Abinoam (the Gracious One), and he came "out of Kedesh-naphtali" (the holy place, where there had been a struggle). Barak, confessing (iv. 10) his need of allies, summoned to his aid Zebulun (the people who dwell, abide) and Naphtali (those who wrestle, fight). In the record of triumph (v. 18) they are described as "a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high place of the field."

But not alone by Deborah and Barak, with Zebulun and Naphtali, was the oppression broken. It is written (v. 2) that "the people willingly offered themselves." As the freewill offering was taken into the house of the Lord, so did the people

yield themselves in spontaneous, unreserved surrender to their God.

That is the background to the conditions for the believer prevailing in prayer. Let us fill in the picture as it relates to the present. What is the call to the Church of God, if not to loosen the captives of Satan, and deliver from the bondage of foreign forces those at home, or on the mission-field, whom Christ by His Cross has made free? But the Church finds lions in the path. Under an even more intelligent command and law than were the Canaanites, the powers of evil are massed together in battle array (Eph. vi. 12; Rev. xvi. 14) to dispute the advance of the Church, and prevent the breaking of the bands of wickedness.

How is the Church to win the day? Barak comes on the scene. The Lord Jesus Christ has been at Kedesh-naphtali, and the struggle has ended in victory. To make it applicable to the purposes of His Father, He calls in the co-operation of Deborah, of Christian activity, the powers of the believer, redeemed, yielded, and sanctified. He, who is the Light and the Word, the flashing "Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," bids to His side, for offence against the oppressors, those of the household of Zebulun and Naphtali, the people who know how to dwell deep in the Living Word, and take their place in the fighting line with the spirit of "full and glad surrender" possessing them.

Let us look more closely and definitely at the conditions for a work of prayer that wins victories for God and men.

What is the message to us of Barak, the Son of the Gracious One ?

This : that there must be *living union with Christ*, the Light, the Word made flesh. That is the starting-point. Union has two stages: (1) Regeneration through the Spirit of God (John iii. 7 ; 2 Cor. v. 17) ; and, following that, (2) Identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (2 Cor. iv. 10).

Calvary is God's one appointed place where it is possible for man to be redeemed from the curse due to sin, and to be lifted above the influences resulting from sin. And in entering into the deeper meaning of the Cross, as it deals with the effects of the fallen creation in the character of man, we find the secret of deliverance from all natural and evil supernatural obstacles to a really powerful work of prevailing prayer (Rom. vi. 6, 11).

The natural man shows itself in many ways, and where it is dominant in the believer there exists a source of weakness for the prayer life. And the Apostle declares that, to manifest the life of Christ in our relation to God and man, it is imperative that our partnership in the death of Christ, in dealing with the self life, should be made continually and persistently effective.

" In proportion as we realize the death, we become partakers of the eternal life of Christ : as we die with Him, we also live with Him : as we descend deeper into the death, we ascend higher into the life : as we, by the Holy Spirit, see to the dying side, the Lord sees to the living side " (Dr. F. B. Meyer).

May we not be tempted to minimize or forget the bond that subsists between the power of the Cross in us, and our power in prayer for the world ! In the measure in which this union is progressive and experimental, the Lord Jesus Christ, wielding "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," comes to us with a double exhortation.

Prevailing prayer is the mark of those who belong to the household of Zebulun and Naphtali, and, therefore, the fulness of a devotional life rests largely upon the practical effect of the Word in our hearts (John xv. 7). Faithful study of the written Word, and loyal obedience thereto, will give light on the will of God, and have its meed of influence on prayer. The rightness of our attitude to this will impart strength to "wrestle and fight and pray."

What is the message of Deborah to us ?

That prevailing prayer requires *a proper relationship* established between us and the Father and the Son. The provision, made in the death and resurrection of Christ, is complete, but it remains for us to make it actual. Christ has redeemed us, but we have to appropriate by acts of faith the benefits flowing from His sacrifice. The "old man" is crucified, but only by obedience to the law of reckoning (Rom. vi. 11) can we make it experimental ; finding, as we do so, that it is powerless to retain its mastery in our lives. The Holy Spirit has been given, but our knowledge of Him and His power depends on our ever receiving Him and yielding all to His guidance. Victory over Satan

is perfect, but we need to have Christ reigning in us to put that victory into practical operation in the day's life.

Thus, prayer to prevail requires the co-operation of the redeemed man in all his God-given faculties and rights. What are these rights? What have the Cross and the Resurrection procured for us?

(1) The right to take up *our position* in Christ by faith, and to keep it by obedience and surrender (Eph. ii. 6, vi. 10). The holding of that position makes all the difference between prayer that wins battles and the prayer that fails in effectiveness. The power that position with Christ has on life is the power it will have in prayer.

(2) The right is ours to live in an *attitude of constantly receiving* the grace of the Holy Spirit (Eph. vi. 10).

(3) We have the right to *answer* with real faith and determination of will God's call to hold the ground in regard to all spiritual positions for Him (Eph. vi. 11): to realize that each one in his own home or church or sphere of business is occupying a strategic point for God against evil, and the one thing we are expected to do is "to stand."

(4) And it is our right to recognize that God bids us use the *weapon of resistance* to Satan, and in using it to rejoice in victory over the enemy (Jas. iv. 7).

"It would be a dreadful thing," was said to the writer, "to resist Satan, because he has such power"; and, it may be, the same thought is in the minds of many. "But let us not forget,"

wrote the late Dr. A. T. Pierson, " the divine and correct order of things. Submit . . . resist. . . . To attempt to resist the devil before submitting to God will bring failure every time, but he who first submits himself to God has God on his side, and so it is man *plus* God, meeting and resisting the devil, and then Satan will surely be worsted. But to try to resist the devil in one's own strength, without such alliance with God, brings only defeat to ourselves. Alliance with God is what strengthens us in our defiance of the devil, and he who is one with God may quietly, as with folded arms, look even the great adversary in the face, and say : ' I fear thee not. My Lord Jesus Christ has met thee in the conflict of the Temptation and has broken thy power.' "

No one in league with Jesus Christ need fear Satan. As he claims the shelter of the Blood, and walks carefully in step with the Holy Spirit, he will find the Lord a sun and shield to him in the conflict of the day.

What is the message of the people to us ?

The complete abandonment of ourselves to do the will of God makes the redemption of Calvary practical, and gives to prayer a moving sense, a power, even an authority, leading to some definite result for the cause of Christ. Without this act of surrender, no real communion with God is possible. Unless this attitude of yieldingness is maintained, no rich experience of the presence of God can be known.

Prayer, to reach its goal, requires honest recogni-

tion of these conditions and intelligent obedience to them : union with Christ that makes vital and full our personal identification with Him in the meaning of His death : faith in Him that lays hold of the achievements of the Cross and translates them into acts, creating victories for His glory in His world-service : and love, that keeps nothing from Him, for the satisfaction of His own heart and the accomplishment of His Father's desires.

CHAPTER X

PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD

"The Word is like a flaming sword,
A wedge that cleaveth stone :
Keen as a fire so burns Thy Word,
And pierceth flesh and bone.
Oh, send it forth
O'er all the earth,
To shatter all the night of sin,
The darken'd heart to cleanse and win."

"And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying always."—EPH. vi. 17, 18.

THE Word of God and man's prayer stand to each other in a relationship of the most perfect reflexivity. The study of divine truth finds a natural outlet for its inspiration in prayer, and the prayer that gives expression to its burden at the Mercy-seat repairs, in Brainerd's phrase, to "a full fountain" of divine light, for a deeper discovery of the mind of God, and a clearer guidance on His gracious plan.

In the heart of Jeremiah, "that most human of prophets," the Word of the Lord was "as a burning fire shut up" in his bones (xx. 9). Forced to say, "I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" ("contain," R.V.), the spirit of supplication and intercession, lit from the heart of God, broke out in prayer and praise, and in defence

of the character of his God. Silent he could not be. The Word inspired prayer. Prayer set the Word on fire. St. Paul, in his Roman prison, counting up the unsearchable riches of the Living Word, and catching the vision of the eternal purposes of God concerning Him, bowed his knees unto the Father.

So throughout the ages the Word has fashioned intercessors, and prayer has evidenced the greatness and livingness of the Book. Round it storms have raged. It is a field of conflict on which men war with men. It is the target at which are directed the fiercest attacks of the unseen powers of evil. A thousand times the sceptics have announced the Waterloo of Christianity, and preached the funeral sermon of the Bible, and a thousand times, not the Bible nor Christianity, but the enemies of God, have gone their way to the graveyard.

The present witnesses the most persistent endeavours to decry its authorship, to deny its facts, to destroy its divine birth, and, as a result, doubts are begotten. Ignorance of it is widespread. Spiritual calamities abound. "But," writes Dr. D. M. McIntyre, of Glasgow, "this book lives: it palpitates with the life of God. It is human as Christ was: as Christ was it is divine." It calls for prayer to withstand the shock. Prayer is its partner for the revelation of its truth. Prayer is its ally for the gathering of its fruit.

A young clergyman, who was dying, in his delirium was often heard in supplication for or preaching to his flock. One day the listeners around his bed caught this petition from his lips:

“Lord, teach us to pray much, that we may be able to pray more.”

Bengel's motto was: “Apply thyself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to thyself.” If that were made practical, would it not give such revelations of sin and need as would drive us in contrition of mind and confession of lip to the Throne of Grace? Deeper study of the Word is essential for the nurture of the prayer life. When we enter the secret place, where God abideth, through the blood of the Cross, and can say, “Remember the Word on which Thou hast caused Thy servant to hope,” we stand on ground where we shall find that the Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. “Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together” is His message of encouragement to His redeemed people. A closer walk with God in prayer is necessary to fill the Word with quickening power.

There are in Scripture many instances of the union between the Word and prayer. Let us consider a few of them.

I

The Lord Jesus Christ presents us with a wonderful three-fold cord for the enlargement of Christian experience. (John xv. 7.)

Abide—Word—Ask. The Word abides in the believer as it pervades his character with enlightening and sanctifying grace. The believer abides in the Word as he shapes his life by its exhortations and commands, giving diligent and sensible attention to its permissions and prohibitions.

The immediate result is a personal rooting and grounding of faith by which he draws strength to resist influences that tend to weakness. And the further result is the discovery of a position of authority on which to stand in his ministry of prayer. "Ye shall ask what ye will." The door into the treasure-house of heaven is open to the believer who lives in close intimacy with God, obedient to His revealed will.

Prayer is therefore unlimited in its possibilities of attainment for the believer, as the Word of God is unhindered in its powers of achievement in the believer.

II

It is worthy of notice that in the Early Church, the Word and prayer were linked together as defining apostolic ministry. (Acts vi. 4.)

When the first assault of Satan on the rank and file of the new-born Church had succeeded (v. 1, 2), it was followed by a bold effort to cause the Apostles themselves to succumb to a subtle temptation, and thus plant a seed of weakness in the very heart of the new movement.

The snare, cleverly laid for their feet, was intended to divert their energies from spiritual to philanthropic work. In the mercy of God the Apostles awoke to their peril, recognizing that they were almost abandoning the special ministry, for which they had been ordained in the upper room, in favour of duties which, although legitimate and necessary, were only secondary in importance.

Light led them to safety ; and they said to the

rest of the Christian assembly: "It is not reason that we should leave (*lit.* leave behind) the Word of God, and serve tables. . . . We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."

The experience of St. Paul in satanic hindrances grew the larger as he followed on, and, realizing the cleverness of the adversary to assume the appearance of an angel of light, he has warned us not to be ignorant of his devices.

The possibility is no less in the present than it was in that far-off day, of doing a work that is right and yet missing the purpose of life, of spending energy on good deeds and finding they are only the second best. And it is a matter of thankfulness that the Apostles so early caught the vision of their resources, emphasizing to every age the distinctiveness of the agencies which God means to use in bringing lives to His feet.

Prayer and the ministry of the Word! Pentecost has for all time put each in its right place. The power of the Word rests back on the prayer force behind it. The reason for prayer is given in the sending forth, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, of men with the message of God.

III

Prayer in the divine plan can become the creator of a boldness of spirit which furnishes the messenger of the Gospel with needed qualities for service. (Eph. vi. 18, 19.)

Without prayer fear might prove too strong for many a witness. Paul singles himself out as one

in special requirement of prayer partners, who will undertake to reinforce him on the field of service.

Is there no call to-day for "helpers of the war"? The difficulties in the Church and on mission stations are such as to make brave hearts quail, and the pressure of the antagonisms of darkness is revealing its undeniable presence in a scarcity of workers, or financial straitness, or nervous collapse, or sad tragedy.

"I am returning to my field," said a missionary to a friend but recently, "and I know I shall get no backing in prayer from my Church at home." Can one conceive what that must mean to a servant of God? How is he to find "fit utterance" in his ministry, that when he opens his lips he may fearlessly make known the mystic secret of the glad tidings of the Lord?

From hard-pressed ministers, from missionaries fighting against the increasing forces of evil, comes the call to the people of God for help through prayer. How much it would accomplish for them if they knew that behind them was a body of "Prayer Heroes," standing with them for personal power and fulness of victory through their message! The hour and the need demand this.

IV

Equally clear is it that prayer can open doors for the proclamation of the mystery of Christ. (Col. iv. 3.)

"Every conspicuous step and stage of progress," writes the late Dr. A. T. Pierson, in *The New Acts*

of the Apostles, "is directly traceable to prevailing, believing, expectant supplication. . . . Every missionary biography, from those of Eliot and Edwards, Brainerd and Carey, down to Livingstone and Burns, Hudson Taylor and John E. Clough, tells the same story: prayer has been the preparation for every new triumph, and the secret of all successes: and so, if greater triumphs and successes lie before us, more fervent and faithful praying must be their forerunner and herald. . . . It is the central glory of missionary history that it has produced more intrepid and self-sacrificing soldiers of the Cross and more great intercessors like Moses, Samuel, Daniel, and Elijah, than any other form even of Church life."

V

No less emphatic is the assertion that prayer can keep the door open for the progress of the Word of God. (2 Thess. iii. 1.)

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course (run along, have speed untrammelled, may hold its onward course) and be glorified." A clear path never means cessation of opposition. Paul knew the persistence of satanic pursuit. Ever upon the Apostle's track followed some form of hindering device or persecution. Writing to the Church at Corinth he had to say, "a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. xvi. 9); as he also had to remind the Church of the Thessalonians that he "would have come unto them, once

and again, but Satan hindered him " (1 Thess. ii. 18).

When the Word of God goes forth on its mission of salvation and attraction, all hell is moved. The legions of darkness are rushed up to the battlefield. Forces are set in motion to block the path of the missionary, to close doors, to create hardness of spirit among believers, to fill minds with criticism, and so produce division, to awaken feelings of offence, of enmity, of resistance and disinclination toward action.

"The Word of God is not bound." The Breath of God is in every line of it. It is the Spirit's agency for making us "wise unto salvation." If it goes forth, it goes palpitating with the very life divine, mighty in its eternal purpose of stirring hearts with conviction, and crying to a world of needy lives, "Behold, behold the Lamb."

"God's law is perfect, and converts
The soul in sin that lies;
God's testimony is most sure,
And makes the simple wise."

But it is evident that, if its work is to be done, if the minister, the missionary, the evangelist, are to see the triumph of Truth, there must be a power behind to keep the door open. The adversaries must be bound.

Paul knew that Satan had the power to close doors and hinder the truth (1 Thess. ii. 18). That power he will use successfully where the Church of God falls asleep and becomes careless in regard

to an aggressive opposition to him through the victory of the Cross. The hand that would shut the door must be broken. The Word was not bound in the day of Paul, because the Apostle gave himself to prayer in his prison, binding antagonistic forces, and thus holding open the door for the messenger of life to go through to the nations.

It is not enough to say, "Thus saith the Lord, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The Lord does not do all the work on the battlefields. He calls for our co-operation. There is a responsibility quite peculiar to the disciple. Else the commands to watch and pray, to work and to tread on all the power of the enemy have no meaning.

The call of the risen Lord is not, "Pray for open doors." It is, "Keep the door open." No man can shut it: but men can try to shut it. In living churches, on the mission-field, satanic determination is never lacking to hinder spiritual endeavour, to depress the worker, to remove the witness, to create antagonisms through political complications, or commercial greed, or national aspirations, or individual mistakes and weaknesses, if by such means the door can be closed and the Word of God can be hampered in its course.

The secret of the open door is PRAYER. Behind that word, and those who proclaim it, must stand men and women who believe in the power of prayer, who know how to unite with Christ in the fulness of His victorious finished work on Calvary, and by earnest, persistent, aggressive prayer make it

possible for the Word of God to go forth and the preachers of the Word to continue to—

“ Catch the order of our Captain,
Wield the Spirit's sword ;
Onward, fearless, press to conquer,
Slaying with His Word.”

In view of all this, prayer increases in its importance. The Word of God is going forth. More copies of the Scriptures are being circulated than ever. Tracts, books, magazines, publications of various kinds are being scattered broadcast. This is the hour for bands of believers everywhere to stand behind the preacher and the Book, giving themselves to such an intercession, in the Name of Christ, and on the ground of His Calvary triumph, that the power of evil will be broken, and the Word of life made to run, with speed untrammelled, bringing light and hope, joy and power to many hearts, and hastening the coming of the King.

CHAPTER XI

PRAYER AND REVIVAL

"I know a Fount where sins are washed away;
I know a place where night is turned to day;
Burdens are lifted, blind eyes made to see;
There's a wonder-working power in the Blood of Calvary."

"Then the fire of the Lord fell."—I KINGS xviii. 38.

IN these words is crystallized a marvellous record of the power of prayer. Two facts stand out with great clearness in this Old Testament incident, and their counterparts can only too vividly be recognized in the religious life of our land.

1 *It was a time of apostasy and peril in the nation.* Darkness was over the land. Forces antagonistic to God and the worship of God were diligently and aggressively at work in the Court and among the people. For three years the divine judgment had lain heavy upon them.

2. *Then came the challenge to these powers of evil.* For answering the aggressiveness of sin and pricking the bubbles of misguided and deceived men, God has always His own time.

Standing forth before his countrymen as the champion of divine rights, Elijah threw down the gauntlet to Satan in his attack upon the prophets of Baal. The evil in Court and nation was laid bare, and, in the name of his God, he challenged

them to a test which would prove whether Jehovah or Baal was supreme. "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the grove four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table . . . and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord ; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God " (1 Kings xviii. 19, 24).

The circumstances of to-day present something of a similarity to those of Elijah's day. Satanic forces are abroad. The land is in the grip of a spirit that holds in it perilous possibilities for the religious and social life of the realm. The Church seems, by many tokens, to have lost touch with the people. In her preaching there is a lack of that confident accent of faith which in the past made her a mighty witness for God. Fundamental truths are not proclaimed with the emphasis they demand. We greatly need the return of God to the world, in power.

It is the Church, in the first instance, in which revival is a clamant and vital necessity. To condemn those who enter no church, to denounce their pleasures, and even their sins, is only to increase their antagonism to the Church and its message. After all, a country is very much what its Churches make it. We have no right to cast any aspersion upon the world and its devotees because they do not believe in the Christ of the Bible, if they are failing to discover Him and His power in us.

How are the perils of the day to be met? In no other way is that possible but by the coming of God in power to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment. That happened in Israel when Elijah witnessed for Jehovah. Graphically the historian has described the entrance of God upon the scene: "Then the fire of the Lord fell." What is the meaning of that sentence? It is the point of division between Jehovah and Baal. It is the signal of victory, the dawn of revival.

What led to it? What are the creators of revival?

Prayer is essential, and yet not in prayer alone can revival originate. Charles Finney, in his *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, says, with appropriate force: "Some have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached, and talked, and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered that they had so little success. And the reason was that they forgot to use the other branch of the means—effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact that truth, by itself, will never produce the effect without the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit is given in answer to prayer. Sometimes it happens that those who are the most engaged in employing truth are not the most engaged in prayer. This is always unhappy, for unless they have the spirit of prayer (or unless some one else has), the truth, by itself, will do nothing but harden men in impenitence. Probably in the Day of Judgment it will be found that nothing is ever done by the truth, used ever

so zealously, unless there is a spirit of prayer somewhere in connection with the presentation of truth. Others err in the reverse direction. Not that they lay too much stress on prayer. But they overlook the fact that prayer might be offered for ever, by itself, and nothing would be done ; because sinners are not converted by direct contact of the Holy Ghost, but by the truth, employed as a means. To expect the conversion of sinners by prayer alone, without the employment of truth, is to tempt God."

Revival has always sprung from the right use of the right means. When did the fire fall on Carmel ? When did revival begin there, and Jehovah show His hand in power ? The answer to that question is a revelation of the factors which are manifest in every revival as its source.

I

Elijah emphasized before the people the secret of all their trouble.

" And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him : and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down " (xviii. 30). In that broken altar lay a most significant fact. It told why the forces of evil had been triumphant, and what had brought Elijah out with his challenge to them. That was the cause of the spiritual declension, for from that had proceeded the advantage of Satan over them.

Is that not the reason for much of our present spiritual weakness and defeat? The altar has been forgotten, slighted, broken down. What does it typify? Is it not the Cross? And only when the altar had been repaired and restored to its central place in the eyes of the people was it possible for the sacrifice to be offered upon it, and the fire of the Lord to fall and consume it.

Revival springs from the Cross. Dishonour that, and God hides Himself. Put the Cross aside, in the deep magnificence of its meaning, and the Holy Spirit withdraws His power. May the restraining of revival not be the result of a broken-down altar, a slighted Cross, a silence regarding the great and full message of the death of the Son of God?

The Church, to a large extent, has lost her vision of Calvary, and is becoming blind to the magnitude of her loss. The Cross needs to be brought back to its right place in our theology, to understand its meaning, and proclaim fearlessly its fulness of victory.

To let the Holy Spirit exercise His power through the Cross in our lives is essential to revival fire touching and possessing us. Revival is not an accident, but the outcome of divine principles in action. Are we willing to pay the price of a religious awakening? That may mean a revolution in the manner of living, putting aside wrong standards of measurement, and yielding ourselves, honestly, and without reserve, to the Spirit of God, to enter into the deepest meaning of personal identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

May that not be the condition God is waiting to see fulfilled by us to answer the cry for revival: "Let the Cross do its work in you"? When that is done, there will be no difficulty about putting it, in the fulness of its meaning, in the very forefront of preaching, and keeping it there, as the one power by which men can be saved and led into a sanctification that, in experience, is marked by sanity and healthfulness, and into a service that stretches out to the uttermost ends of the earth with the message of life through a crucified, risen, victorious, and returning Lord.

But more than an altar repaired was necessary for the success of God's work in Israel.

II

Elijah shut the door on counterfeits.

"And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. . . . And he made a trench about the altar . . . and the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water" (xviii. 25, 32, 35).

In this work of Elijah for God there was to be no room for any false fire. Are we learning that Satan is ever on the watch to dash in with his counterfeits when there is any likelihood of the Spirit of God moving? Can we detect them? In orgies of emotionalism, in going "under power," in allowing tricks to be played on the will, in hypnotic

influences at work in assemblies of people, in falling into trances, in power that is psychic instead of spiritual, can we recognize the false fire and resist it?

And, apart from the counterfeits, what is our motive for seeking revival? Is there not need for Christian workers to come to an end of their own resources and plans if revival is to visit us? Must it not be altogether for the glory of God in the land that we ask and labour for such a longed-for change in religious life, and not for the advantage of any denomination or church or personal interest? "Put no fire under." God demands purity of motive, straightforwardness of action, devotion to His honour and cause.

One other factor was apparent in that Carmel victory, as it must have its right place in all our work if revival is to come.

III

Elijah confessed before the whole nation his dependence upon God and God's place in the life and prosperity of the people.

"Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again" (ver. 37). Longing for revival, pure and unhindered, is universal among the children of God.

"Oh, for the breath of the Spirit,
Oh, for the might of His sword
Leading us on to inherit
All that in Jesus is stored."

Some such cry as that rises upwards to the Throne of Grace from hour to hour. In the moving of God's Spirit in the world, as of old time, lies the one hope of dealing with and repairing the ravages of sin. And great is the need for persistent, prevailing, expectant prayer.

What can such prayer effect? It paves the way for revival. It creates the atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit can work. It defeats the antagonisms of evil. It affects human stubbornness and satanic subtleties. It breaks the grip of the devil on conscience, mind, spirit, and will, opening the door for the light of truth to enter and the life of God to possess the soul.

Of the great revival of 1859 and 1860 in the north of Scotland we are told that "a strange awe began to fall upon the minds of many, and an expectation of such a visitation took shape in their prayers, both private and public. Then came the visits to Aberdeen and other northern towns of such laymen as Grant of Arndilly, Brownlow North, and Reginald Radcliffe. At the same time there came to be developed a remarkable spirit of prayer. . . . The need for prayer was felt as never before, and appeals were made for united and persevering supplication. It was no uncommon thing for hours to be spent in prayer in view of special services that were to follow. . . . Too much stress cannot be laid on this as a feature of the movement from the beginning, and it remained a distinguishing characteristic of it throughout. One of the most notable instances of its power occurred in

connection with meetings which were to be held in Gartly. For several previous days much prayer was engaged in by those who were to take part in them.

“The greater part of the previous night was spent in prayer by several of them. When the people had assembled in the Gartly Free Church, and the Word, which had come with power several days before in the grounds of Huntly Lodge, was opened up—‘Said I not unto thee, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God’—that night many were pricked in their hearts. The chief speaker on that occasion was Mr. Radcliffe. The scene was a never-to-be-forgotten one. Many, old and young, sought earnestly the way of life. Long after, the fruits of that night were found in changed lives.”

“When David and Goliath met, the wrong against the right,
The giant armed with human power, and David with God’s
 might,
God’s power with David’s sling and stone the giant low did
 lay,
And the God that lived in David’s time is just the same to-day.”

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together.” God is just the same to-day.

Let us not lose sight of one outstanding feature in the wonderful victory on Carmel. One man stood for God against the forces and influences of evil. One man with God became the saviour of his nation. One man repaired the altar and hoisted again the standard of loyalty to Jehovah. *And that man’s own altar had not broken down.* For that

reason was God able to use him amid the darkness of apostasy.

Then the fire fell. And the people fell. And the rain fell. God got back His own.

Are we making it possible for the fire to fall in our land? When we come to the point where we can say, "Let God have His way with me; let the Holy Spirit do His work in me; let the Cross triumph in my life," revival is not far off.

CHAPTER XII

AN IDEAL PRAYER LIFE

“One Christ, one Cross, one Sacrifice, one Priest,
One Altar and one Temple for us all :
One Spirit in whose common love we rest,
One God and Father on whose Name we call.”

“And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication.”—DAN. ix. 3.

STRIKING characteristics are revealed in the record of Daniel's life. He was a man of unshaken faith. In the great Christian roll-call of the early witnesses for God, though his name is not mentioned, his deeds are surely described, “who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. xi. 33).

The spirit of faithfulness in every sphere and duty was markedly apparent in him. A mere lad when brought from Jerusalem to Babylon, very shortly he rose to the greatest place in the Empire, continuing in such a position of honour and power even until the first year of Cyrus. Beset with bitter, implacable foes and disappointed rivals, the sacred history thus throws its penetrating light on his character and the secret of his success, “they could find none occasion nor fault ; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him ” (Dan. vi. 4).

And he was a man of prayer, his life, as it is depicted in Scripture, clearly illustrating the need of prayer, its power and results. In the Book of Daniel four occasions are recorded revealing the place prayer had in his thoughts, as well as its far-reaching issues. On each occasion the structure of his prayer service is similar. Four points are expressly stated: (1) The Fact of Prayer; (2) the Feature of Prayer; (3) the Reason for Prayer; and (4) the Results of Prayer.

Reading this book, that vibrates with intense interest, it is evident that the prayer spirit not only sustained him in his many trials, strengthening him to stand tests to his courage and his faith in God, but also prepared him to receive and understand revelations from God.

Is that not the purpose of prayer for each of us? Trials there must be for the children of God. What can uphold them but fellowship with God and the knowledge that they are not alone? Tests will be applied, and only such contact with God as will permeate character with His power can enable them to stand. The desire of God with each believer is to make known His will, as He did to Daniel, for to-day and to-morrow. The sensitiveness of spirit that admits a believer into divine secrets grows only in quiet waiting before God.

The necessity and power of prayer can never be over-emphasized. The life-story of Daniel proves it, as does the experience of the Church of God. Let us look at the prayers of Daniel.

I

1. *The First Fact of Prayer* is stated in these words: "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Dan. ii. 17, 18).

2. *The Feature of this Prayer was its United Action.* An enraged king had ordered the destruction of "all the wise men of Babylon" (ii. 12). Daniel and his fellow-Hebrews had probably received instruction in Chaldean mysteries, and were thus reckoned with the magicians. Face to face with danger (ver. 13), Daniel gathered together all his forces.

3. *The Reason for this act of United Prayer* was (1) to learn the secret of the vanished dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and (2) to save their lives from threatened death (ii. 18). Behind the command of the king was the malice of Satan. To brush Daniel and his companions out of his way would undoubtedly be part of his stratagem. Three times he sought to destroy them—by the sword, the furnace, and the den of lions. The prayer-force possessing these young Hebrews won the day, preserving their lives, and honouring God among idolaters. The same power in and behind the Church to-day holds in it magnificent possibilities of victories for God and truth.

4. *The Results of this United Prayer* are recorded for us (ii. 20, 28 ; iv. 47, 48). This prayer-meeting of four in Babylon is a wonderful revelation of what can be accomplished when believers in prayer come together to engage in a definite prayer battle.

Prayer blocks the way to the success of satanic wiles, fills the atmosphere with spiritual force, loosens out powers which, through the might of God, become effective on the battle-field, and makes the rails on which the purposes of grace run with the joy of salvation to the ends of the earth.

When the great bridge at St. Louis, Mo., in the U.S.A., was nearly completed, it was found that the two halves of the structure would not meet in the centre. The engineer sent to New York to consult the authorities, but, as they sought to find out the error, they received a message saying that the warmth of the sun had expanded the iron, bringing the two ends together.

That is one of the mercies of united prayer. It creates heat, spiritual heat, and God's plans work out successfully. In 1857 one man in New York, concerned about the religious condition of the city, made it known that he would be in a room on Fulton Street on a certain day at noon, to pray, and asked other believers to join him. For half an hour he sat alone. Then he was joined by another and another, until six men were gathered together in united supplication. A financial crisis brought panic, and the citizens flocked to the churches in their anxiety. The Great Awakening came, and

God moved through the land in mighty saving power.

In 1858 He unlocked the door into China, Japan, Italy, Mexico. The spirit of revival broke out in Ulster in 1859. It began by a lady saying to a young man, "My dear, you have never known the Lord Jesus." That was the King's arrow to his heart. For two weeks he had no peace day or night. Then, finding it in Christ, he sought a friend, and led him to the Saviour. These two began to meet for prayer with other two young men. Months passed, and the revival flame was kindled. People were found crying for mercy in the open air. Many met to pray all night. Church services were attended by multitudes.

One minister wrote that "the difficulty used to be to get the people into the church, but the difficulty now is to get them out." That revival crossed to Scotland, and spread over it, becoming "the most stupendous movement that the country had seen since the days of the Covenanters."

Scotland has been said to be "pre-eminently a land of revivals," but it may be doubted if ever even Scotland had a revival of greater depth, or one that shook the country more from its centre to its circumference, than the revival of 1859 and 1860 did. And prayer, and very specially united prayer, was behind it and all through it.

The Welsh revival of 1904-5 began in the same way. That revival we need to-day. Will it not come in answer to united prayer ?

II

1. *The Second Fact of Prayer* is given us. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (vi. 10).

2. *The Feature of Prayer*.—It was *private* prayer, the prayer of a man probably over eighty years of age, alone, hated, suspected, defamed, his life in danger; but he continued in spite of all.

3. *The Reason for Prayer* is recorded as being Daniel's knowledge of the decree of Darius (vi. 9). His enemies, with all the cunning with which Satan could imbue them, had formed a plan to rid themselves of their rival. Under the guise of loyalty to their sovereign, they made the proposition that no one should "ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days (ver. 7), save of the king, on peril of being 'cast into the den of lions.'" What was Daniel's attitude in the face of this decree?

It was (a) one of calm strength (ver. 10). Neither hurried nor frightened, he never for a moment changed the habit of his life Godwards. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, . . . as he did aforetime." Before every threat of the devil the believer can stand in quietness of heart. "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned" (Isa. xliii. 2). In touch with the

Throne, and with the Victorious Christ upon it, we are at the source of peace and power.

(b) Daniel as well kept in an attitude of unflinching loyalty to his God. For him lions had no fear. The threats of his foes could not break his spirit of faithful adherence to principle.

“ And the God that lived in Daniel’s time
Is just the same to-day.”

Faith in Him and faithfulness to His law give strength to the heart and steadiness to the spirit. Secret prayer is the secret of public witness. Intimacy with God in the closet creates boldness for God in the world.

4. *The Results of this Unfailing, Determined Spirit of Prayer* are noted for our encouragement (Dan. vi. 16, 18, 22, 24, 26-28). Loyalty to God never fails.

III

1. *The Third Fact of Prayer* is thus recorded : “ And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication . . . ” (ix. 3).

2. *The Feature of Prayer* on this occasion was *Intercession* for his nation. Illimitable is the value of such prayer, whether it be undertaken for one or many. It joins us in partnership with Him who “ is able to save to the uttermost ” ; which is, as John Flavel wrote, “ a reaching word, and extends itself so far that thou canst not look beyond it.”

To stand in the presence of God for others is to perform a priestly office, high in its nature, holy in

its spirit, rich and abundant in its issue. What miracles have ever been wrought in the realm of grace by those, often hidden from the world, who, like Daniel, have set their faces unto the Lord !

Mr. D. L. Moody's first service in a church in the North of London, in 1872, was very dead and cold. But in the evening the atmosphere seemed charged with the Spirit of God, and the inquiry room was crowded at its close. In the following week he held meetings at which four hundred were brought to the Saviour. The secret of this manifestation of the Spirit's power was revealed. There were two sisters belonging to that church—one strong, the other bedridden. One day the thought came to the latter that she could pray for her church. Day and night her prayer went up to God. She began to ask that Mr. Moody might be sent to that church. On a certain Sunday her sister returned from it with the news that he was preaching in it. "I know what that means," she cried ; "God has heard my prayers." Mr. Moody believed that it was this revival that carried him back to England the next year.

3. *The Reason for Daniel's Prayer is revealed* (ix. 2). The date is interesting. Darius had begun to reign. Babylon had fallen, and the seventy years which God had announced should be the duration of the captivity had almost expired. At such a momentous point of national history was Daniel occupied with "books" which foretold the dawn of a better day. The revelation sent the prophet to his knees in earnest supplication for his

people. His prayer is one of the greatest recorded in the Word of God.

(a) There was confession of national sin (vers. 4-10).

(b) Then he acknowledged the merit of Moses' curse (vers. 11-14), and (c) pled for mercy (vers. 15-19). At that point the prayer was interrupted.

4. *The Results of it* are expressed in ix. 22-27. The complete answer to his intercession was given in the restoration of Jerusalem, and in the great revelation of the entire future of Israel, from the close of the Babylonish captivity to the time of the end.

IV

1. *The Fourth Fact of Prayer.* "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks" (x. 2).

2. *The Feature of this occasion was Prayer with the answer delayed.*

3. *The Reason for the Prayer* was a vision (chap. xii.) granted to him, which evidently had to do with chapter viii., where he was told of great wars that were to be, and that did break out of the divided Grecian Empire.

4. *The Results of this Prayer* are most interesting. (a) There is the appearance of "a certain man" (x. 5; compare Rev. i. 12-17). (b) The explanation of the delayed answer was given (iii. 10) and the prophet saw how his faithful prayer spirit had influenced the fight in the unseen realms, enabling the Man and Michael to break through. Perhaps the explanation of many a prayer that is long in being answered is to be found in this fact, that

Satan, the prince of the power of the air, will keep back, if he can, every answer to every prayer that defeats his schemes. But a great weapon is in our hands to use in the spiritual conflict, and that, the victory of Calvary through the Blood of the Lamb.

Daniel received a further revelation of the rise and destruction of the Antichrist, the tribulations which would befall Israel, the resurrection and judgment, and the final deliverance of his people. His life-experiences and witness for God are messages to us of the need and value of prayer, as they throw light on Satan's hatred and fear of its power. His union and communion with Jehovah assert for our help, that victory for God and a burdened world can still be gained by men and women who, like Daniel, will set themselves to pray, and to persist in prayer, in spite of every hindrance, until the battle is won.

CHAPTER XIII

SONGS OF DELIVERANCE

“ Leader of Thine host,
I Thy triumph boast :
Over sin, death, hell victorious,
Thou hast won salvation glorious,
Thine own blood the cost,
Leader of Thine host.”

“ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken . . . all filled . . . they spake . . . with boldness.”—ACTS iv. 31.

PRAYER is the most triumphant factor in Christian warfare. God's witnesses have ever proved it to be strength in weakness and courage in dismay. Jacob wrestles, and prevails with the angel. Moses prays, and Amalek is discomfited. Elijah prays, and the people return to Jehovah. Asa prays, a victory is gained. Isaiah and Hezekiah pray, and the Assyrians are routed. Daniel prays, and the lions are muzzled. Ezra prays, God answers. The Early Church prays, and the Holy Ghost so fills them that the Gospel is triumphantly proclaimed. Prayer is made without ceasing for Peter, and the chains fall off his hands. To hard-pressed believers in every age it has been a shield on which the world and the wicked one have expended their fiery darts in vain.

Prayer, if it rings a bell in heaven, strikes as

well the keynote in the heart of man, and songs of deliverance pour forth from grateful lips. Now the Leader of the host calls each believer into such a victorious prayer experience. Let no one refuse to answer.

“Do not trifle; earth is groaning
Under wrongs and burdens sore;
Be in earnest: put thy shoulder
To the work that lies before.”

When the Athenian general, Themistocles, was about to fight a naval battle, all was ready, as the sun rose, but the order to advance was delayed. Hours passed on, and no command was given. Some of his officers murmured: “Is Themistocles afraid? Is he a traitor? Is he going to fight this battle?” But Themistocles knew that, at nine o’clock in the morning, according to the geography of the country, a land breeze would sweep down from the mountains. To wait for that would mean that, instead of having half of his men at the oars and the other half at the spears, the wind would carry the ships whither he desired, and all his men would be standing at their posts, fit and armed for battle. He won, because every man was a warrior.

In this great conflict, which heralds the coming of the Lord and the dawning of the new age, God needs every believer in the fighting line through prayer. How shall we act to make prayer a creator of victories?

I

We must learn to hold the rod of God over the opposing forces. (Ex. xvii. 9.)

This assumes the fact and operation of antagonistic powers, and who can doubt it? In His day the Lord Jesus Christ constantly faced them. In his letters to the churches, St. Paul persistently reminded believers of the field of conflict to which they were summoned, and in the present we are becoming increasingly conscious of their existence.

All kinds of spirits are at work—lying, indoctrinating teaching, seducing, deceiving—with the child of God as their objective. Demon action is no fiction. How is it to be met and its purpose thwarted? With the rod in his hand, Moses turned the tide of battle in favour of his own people. What was the secret of his victorious power? He was there in partnership with the living God, and as the rod was kept uplifted the battle was won.

What does the rod signify for us in the conflict of the present? It is the symbol of the divine power, resident in the living Christ on the Throne. Through the Holy Spirit He lives to make His finished work on the Cross complete in the experience of the believer as the source of victory. Faith lays hold of the fact of the victory, and claims that all it implies for us, moment by moment, in witness for God, in opposition to satanic powers, shall be realized. It means, as Mr. S. D. Gordon

has written, "a man on earth, with his life in full touch with the Victor, and sheer out of touch with the pretender prince, insistently claiming that Satan shall yield before the victory of Jesus, step by step, life by life."

As we take up this attitude, in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, living watchfully in identification with Christ for victory over personal sin through the power of His death, we are lifting on high the symbol of the authority which belongs to the Man of Calvary, and making it possible for Him to do some real work in other lives, in some church, on a mission-field, where the pressure of evil is felt. When we slacken in triumphing faith, the opposing forces find their opportunity to push in, bringing defeat to some follower of the Lord or some plan of grace.

II

"The art of life," some one has said, "consists in seizing opportunities." That is a fundamental truth in the prayer life that aims at deliverances. To use each occasion of prayer, not necessarily on one's knees, to turn every circumstance and form of knowledge into a petition to God, is to develop the spirit of prayer. To acquire the habit of prayer regarding all things, and to nourish it, is to be in an alliance with the Great Intercessor on the Throne, that will have a reaction of triumph upon our surroundings.

To pray thus is to get proofs of the magnificence of our God. When Dr. Mackay, of Formosa, was

on his way to China, a sneering shipowner on board his vessel said to him : " And so, Dr. Mackay, you really expect that you will make an impression on the idolatry of the great Chinese Empire ? " " No, sir," replied the missionary ; " I expect God will."

As we pray in this faith and expectation, God works. Evil is paralysed. The schemes of Satan are checked. The channels through which he would seek to send his powers become blocked. His hosts are brought to a standstill, and sorely pressed warriors on many a battle-field find the lightening of the burden and are enabled to sing :

" When Zion's bondage God turn'd back,
As men that dreamed were we,
Then fill'd with laughter was our mouth,
Our tongue with melody."

III

Since He is the Inspirer of prayer, no victory for God over His enemies can ever be won unless we abide in obedient fellowship with His Spirit. To lose contact with Him is to lose the spirit of prayer. To fail in a continuing partnership with Him is to find trouble.

Beset on every hand, as the Christian life is, by spiritual perils, we are warned by the Lord, as well as by His Apostles, with an insistence born of a divinely inspired knowledge of facts and consequences, to be on the alert, to watch against insidious attempts of Satan to break our communion in order to bring to a stop our prayer service. And to prevent this, making the prayer-life an ally of

God, with increasing power, two matters demand our careful attention.

1. *The spirit possessing us must be one of yieldingness to Him.* Not in any mechanical manner can this be done, but through a knowledge of our own need and of the love of God in the gift of His Son. The passion of the divine Heart is the reason for God's claim to the redeemed life, and the believer who has visited Calvary, and on whose mind the meaning of its sacrifice has broken in something of its reality, can only say, "I am Thine."

"Take Thou my hand, my Guide, my Guide !

My eager hand I stretch to Thee :

Hold Thou me up, lead Thou me on,

All shall be well with me."

Yieldingness is continuous. The surrender to God, that works out His plan, is a life lived in happy childlike confidence and obedience, walking with Him, in simplicity and honesty of heart.

Where this act of surrender is restrained, growth in Christian character is arrested, experience becomes limited, and prayer meets with hindrances to its power and persistency.

Liberty must, therefore, be given the Holy Spirit to operate in us through the Cross, that He may fill our lives with an effectiveness of opposition to every form of sin and self, creating in us an honest attitude of sensitiveness to evil and of watchful recognition of the deceptions of which our hearts are capable.

In such right and pure co-operation with Him, made possible and continual through the precious

Blood, we discover the secret of a victorious prayer life. And this spirit of yieldingness will have a very important outcome.

2. *It will enable us to keep the helm of life in a right relationship to the Holy Spirit.* No more determined assaults are made on any faculty in the possession of the believer than on his will. It is the citadel of his being, and he must have the full use of his will to co-operate with God in the prayer life and its issues. Any passive surrender of that will to a supernatural power is not of God. It is the essential condition for satanic possession, and it opens the door to the entrance of forces of evil.

God never interferes with the will of the believer save to liberate it for a service of rich value to Himself and the world. The late Dr. A. B. Simpson, of New York, rightly says that "the human will is the great engine of all spiritual power in man, and even when God moves upon him, He moves upon him through his will. . . . In describing prevailing prayer the Apostle James uses the strong word 'energize'—'the energizing prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' That is the prayer that has force in it."

For life and any form of service each faculty of the redeemed man is to be guided by the central power of a will, possessed by, and thus obedient to, the Holy Spirit. It must remain free to act in co-operation with God. A truly surrendered life will, therefore, in prayer seek the will of God in relation to every recognized need, and as a conse-

quence will be guided by the Holy Spirit into ways of righteousness and peace. Then, with a will set free by His might, union with God will be begun and maintained for the accomplishment of the purposes of grace.

With a surrendered heart and a liberated will, the believer will be vitally and vigorously in touch with the Lord Jesus to reign in life over the forces that seek to produce death. In his prayer life he will see victories won, souls delivered from the bondage of sin, and hearts filled full with the joyous consciousness that Christ is a Saviour who is mighty to save and keep.

Let us, therefore, not be blind to the tactics of the opposing forces, nor slow to receive the grace of God for a life of prayerful serviceableness. In submission to the Holy Spirit, in resistance to evil, may we learn the secret, as well as the value, of standing for God.

“ In God’s whole armour strong,
Front hell’s embattled powers;
The warfare may be sharp and long,
The victory must be ours.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRATEGY OF PRAYER

“ God wills not that His people
By sin enthralled shall be,
But that their lives, as ransomed,
Be lives of victory ;
And so at our disposal
He places all His power,
That we from its resources
May draw in danger’s hour.”

“ Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”—1 PET. iv. 7.

THE older we grow the less we know about prayer. The oftener we pray the more clearly appears the weakness of our prayer life. And yet, though experience reveals in growing measure the mystery of prayer, it makes apparent its wonderful reality. To catch a broader vision of its meaning, to understand what God sees in it and expects to gain through it, is requisite for the practice of a devotional life.

A twofold pressing necessity for a strong, vigorous Christian faith is (1) to recognize the relation of prayer to the Cross, in that its effectiveness in the service of God for the world depends on the measure of the Holy Spirit’s ability to work out in us the purpose of the death of Christ, in dealing with the various forms of the self-life ; and (2) to learn the strategy of prayer, by understanding the methods of Satan, and the principles of God in the warfare of life.

I

There are therefore great essentials for the true exercise of prayer, which reveal its reality and add to its value.

1. *The first is vision.*—"The man whose eyes are open" is the description of Balaam in his parable (Num. xxiv. 3), and with unrestrained vision the plans of God for Israel were made clear to him. Knowledge, in relation to what is human, satanic and divine, is one of the primary conditions of power in prayer.

The conviction in the believer's mind of the sovereignty of God, of the authority of Christ, of the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christian service is necessary, to pray with a strong faith. Equally essential is it to be quite sure that, though the power of Satan is great, it is operative within decided limits. The opened eye of the spirit will then lay hold of these facts, and by union with the living Lord make them effective in the devotional life, while in their light the need of others will be revealed in its true setting, and guidance given as to the methods of meeting it.

2. *Definiteness will accompany vision* (Gen. xviii. 23).—The prayer of Abraham, in full view of the Cities of the Plain, is a masterpiece in the art of directness of plea. A sense of the tremendous issues at stake will enable the believer to visualize aright the spiritual situation, and to waste no time. The concentration of the spirit and force of prayer on the right matter at issue is a necessity. "Get people to leave off the preambles and resolutions,"

said the late Dr. A. T. Pierson. Much of what is called prayer is a slipshod performance, without an objective, characterized by little more than devotional platitudes. It gets nowhere. "Long prayers kill a prayer-meeting," was the considered dictum of D. L. Moody, a master of assemblies.

Dr. Alexander Whyte, a minister for many years in Edinburgh, was once, at an after-meeting, heard to say, "Lord, hold the reins, for I am in the ditch," a petition definite in its aim, as it was honest in its confession. Probably such a petition might often escape the lips of Christian workers were they equally conscious of similar weakness and need.

Indefiniteness of language is as ineffective on the knees in the prayer-room as on the feet in the pulpit. *Generalia non pungent* was the favourite Latin quotation of the veteran Scottish preacher to whom reference has been made: "generalities do not pierce deep enough."

The power of prayer as a weapon, based on the victory of Calvary, to bring down every stronghold of evil, to resist and overcome forces of antagonism, and to do something for God, calls for definiteness and directness of petition.

3. *A supremely important law for the prayer life is to take time to pray.*—A worker remarked on one occasion to the writer: "I am so busy that all my praying has to be done on the run." "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 35). That is the only comment to be made on such a confession of hurried

devotion. Whenever the sense of Satan's power and personal weakness grows into a conscious reality, the determination to pray will become a fixed and immovable habit of the soul.

Every artifice will be employed to create a spirit of carelessness in regard to prayer, and to tempt a substitution of work for spiritual devotion: for, in the satanic survey of the believer's activities, well does the Evil One know that Christian endeavour with little prayer need cause him no great concern. It is effort, saturated with the might that abides in supplication and intercession, that makes headway for God, and breaks through the barriers of evil to victories for righteousness. Never is time lost that is spent "in the secret place of the Most High."

4. *With an increasing experience of conflict in the Christian life, the demand grows for the expression of a spirit of watchfulness.*—"Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. iv. 7). No slight part of the spiritual strategy, that aims at conquest and results in victory, is bound up with this alertness of mind and will.

The mind alert to see and understand, the will quick to judge and act—such is the necessary condition for the believer arriving at the goal of his prayer service. Very earnestly does the Apostle exhort the followers of his Lord. And who could better advise and warn them than the man who, through much tribulation, entered into the experience of victory? To be in a spirit of wakefulness toward God, toward the world with all its temptations, and self with all its weaknesses, is essential,

to know how to make prayer operate most powerfully in the critical moment of spiritual need.

To watch keenly all world-movements, and all the circumstances around individual work, is one of the chief elements in the strategy of prayer. Not to watch, and thus not to relate events to each other and to the great plan of God, is to fail to pray intelligently. We need to watch against impatience with God in relation to answers to prayer : against wrong motives : against the tendency to misjudge others : against the nervous burdening of conscience and spirit in regard to the objects of prayer : and against being pushed to act without taking time to survey the matter from the viewpoint of the presence of God.

II

Napoleon, with the eye of a military genius, quickly perceived the key-position of a battle-field, and held it regardless of the cost to his troops. In every life and work there is such a position, held by the powers of evil, from which they must be evicted, if that life is to be won for Christ, and that work made spiritually successful. In all operations on the battle-field of daily life three things require to be kept steadily in view.

1. *The point of obstruction must be found out, and prayer focused upon it.*—In the case of some one, that point may be a weakness of character, some failure in early training, some inherited evil. It may lie in a conscience that requires awakening, or a mind that must be convicted, or a will that

needs to be stirred into right action. On the obstruction, whatever it may be, as it is revealed through waiting upon God and watching the object of thought, prayer must be concentrated.

2. *Again, it is profitable to turn every circumstance connected with the matter that concerns us into prayer.*

—All knowledge becomes fuel to feed the prayer spirit, and all such intensive prayer helps to throw light on the problem and its possible solution.

3. *And nothing is more important than to get behind the visible trouble to the invisible source.*—

Paul clearly shows us that the cause of difficulty in any sphere is not human, but satanic. Flesh and blood yield to influences that work unseen. Prayer is the only power that pierces through the outward, and reaches the centre, from which springs opposition.

The key-position is there, behind the outworks of human obstinacy or weakness. Prayer can unveil it, and, when it is discovered, prayer in the Name of the Victor on the Throne, prayer in the power of the Cross, prayer through the union of the believer with the Holy Ghost, can focus on that position, and persistent prayer will not fail.

General Lord Horne recently said regarding military operations: "If you want victory, you must attack." Our Lord has declared that the secret of His Church's success lies, not in waiting for the assaults of evil, but in pressing the battle to the utmost, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." An aggressive concentration of the power of prayer, in alliance with God, and under the shelter of the Blood, is the believer's

only hope of winning the fight against evil, and crowning the work of grace with victory.

And thus we come back to the personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, which after all is the secret of all strength in individual experience or Christian endeavour.

III

And that is the Cross practically at work in our natures. The "old man, crucified with Christ"—that is the fact of God on which we stand for all power in every aspect of life. "Reckoning ourselves dead" to its asserted mastery is our response to the message of Calvary, our act of faith which meets God's fact of deliverance, and translates it into an actual experience.

Then as we keep in the spirit of yieldedness to the Holy Ghost, obedience to Him calls us to lay aside every evil revealed, to say "No" to every attempt of the "old man" to recapture the throne, and to put ourselves, definitely and persistently, on the side of God for righteousness against wrong.

The more we thus yield to the Holy Spirit, the more shall we find the Cross to be, not only our place of continuous and victorious dying to sin, but the place where we enter into an ever closer union with the Risen Christ, to find in Him life that overcomes death, and a Presence that breathes through our beings a spirit like unto His own. "I live, yet not I: but Christ liveth in me."

